You see no dream is unattainable in life but is only cut short by doubt that we can only be as we are. To break free of this stone one must break free from his old life and begin upon his dreams.

check out the rest of Jeremy Towner's BWO piece on page 59

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 11.31

What's new for you few editorial note readers! Welcome to issue 11.31. We have yet another wonderful guest writer to feature in this editorial note this week, but before we go there, let us say we appreciate the loyalty you writers show to the program each week. It is a real treat to deliver Beats to you all each week, and of course conduct the weekly workshops, which we have been doing for many years now.

All right... our guest writer, Nick Jones has been affiliated with The Beat Within since 1999. We first met Nick when he was fighting for his life in San Mateo County's Hillcrest Juvenile Hall. He has come a long way since those dark days. We are so honored that Nick continues to find time to work with The Beat Within, if it's typing and editing, or speaking in the community about his life. Today we are thrilled to give him this special page to update us all on his life and to definitely set the tone to this latest issue. We bring you Nick Jones!

Well what's up everyone? How's life for all you Beat Within readers? As for me life is still dragging on. The past two years of my life have been very confusing. I've seen how much dedication and endurance play a part in our lives. For me it seems that I have had a very long ongoing battle with myself over being lazy and lagging to get things done.

Aside from this though, I'm still a 23 year old father of two darling little boys and being a father I now know how this responsibility can take you from your comfortable daily routine, to a schedule that will have you running around like a chicken with your head cut off.

At first I tried to wash away my extra stress with drinking. That soon lead to drugs and before you know it I was completely messing up. I went from a full time job as an assistant office manager, great loving relationship with the mother of my kids, nice fast car to no job, no car, a restraining order filed against me in which I was ordered to stay away from my own children.

This sudden turn of events, even though it was brought on by myself, hit me hard. I was so used to being on top of things and being known as the one that was responsible, that by the time I realized how bad I was messing up it was almost too late. For a while I would sit back and look at all of the crazy things that I have done in my life and where I am at currently in my life. At that point I was amazed at how much of a monster I had become and I found myself comparing myself to others (something that if you know me I never do) trying to see if I was really normal or really crazy.

It's hard to put my finger on exactly what I was thinking those two years I spent running around messing up, but all I know is that all the pain and misery of seeing my loved ones hurting because of me was too much to bare and I knew I had to do something. So I thought to myself, "What is any other young person my age doing?" I came up with the conclusion that the majority of them would be in college, plus it seemed to be a respectable thing to be doing at this point in my life.

So I sat down and thought about what I would like to be and I came up with a college degree majoring in business management. I did about two semesters before realizing that I wasn't dragging in money for my family, so I dropped out of college to join a carpenters training course that was referred to me by my friend, Allegra. It was a fourteen week hands on training, in which at the end you get put into the union for free! So that's about where I am now. I finally finished my training and I am currently part of San Francisco's Local #22.

Going through this training really helped me out as far as personal strength and regaining confidence in myself. It always feels good to be able to complete something and look back at it and know that only by my own determination to make it did I complete this section in my life. To me that's what life is about, fighting to find your place in this complex crazy world.

The one thing that has helped me out though is always remembering that as long as you are still fighting to make something of yourself you are going in the right direction. It's when you fail yourself or accept defeat that you stop living and start simply existing.

As you can see I'm probably going through the same things that any other person my age is going through. I'm just starting to figure out life and I know that it's not going to be easy but with prayer and hope for a better future I will always come out on top. So to all you still locked up and waiting for your day to rejoin the community all I can say is keep your head up... the sun is still shining for the all of us.

Before I leave I would like to share with you a quote someone had etched into the ceiling in my cell over in San Quentin State Prison's Carson Section(the hole) and it read... "IF NOT NOW, WHEN? IF NOT HERE, WHERE?" this means to me basically if I ain't going to start handling business like a real man now and here, where and when am I? Keep your head up, Peace.

Beautiful Nick! You've touched us and we know you will touch those special editorial note readers as well.

Ok, the topics addressed prior to the writing in this issue were, "Complicated" - How did your life get so complicated (hard, confusing)? Here you sit in juvenile hall. Your freedom is taken. You're accused of a crime, or you sit in the hall because you violated your probation. You haven't been in school for a while. Total strangers are now in charge of your life. Certain family members and friends no longer want to associate with you. All you wanted to do was chill: drink and/or smoke. Money was all you care(d) about. The gang, the block has you hooked and that's the only thing, or was the only thing on your mind. In truth there's a chance, from the way things are going in your life, if you don't change for the better you could lose your freedom forever (or you could die). Now tell us this week, how did your life get so complicated? How did this happen? Who is to blame? What can be done to make things less complicated? Tell us your thoughts from the road you have traveled on, how once a simple life has turned so complicated.

The second topic discussed was "Power Outage" -Lately, because of the heat, there have been power outages all across the Bay Area. This made us wonder about a different kind of power outage... What we want to know is about your own power outage. When was there a time, if ever, that you felt you had no power over your life? And we're not just talking about the easy answer of "right now because I'm locked up." We're also talking about on the streets. Was there a time that you were free and lost all control? Or maybe you feel like you'll be in the game forever and that you don't have the power to get out? And if you've always had power over you life, then tell us how you kept it for so long. What did you do in times where your power was in jeopardy and you had to gain it back in order to steer your life down whatever path you chose (instead of a path chosen for you by others)? It's hot, so tell us when you had a power outage...

And our last topic, "The Beach" – Most of us love to relax at the beach on a sunny day. Some of us like to go to the beach when it's foggy and cold. We all have different reasons to go to the beach. For some it is to escape city living. For others it is to feel the wind, smell the ocean air and hear the ocean waves. Then there are those who love to run and play in the sand, jump and splash around in the ocean water, maybe even surf or build sand castles. Now tell us what it is about the beach you like or dislike? Do you have a favorite beach? A favorite time of day to go? A favorite beach memory? What do you enjoy doing at the beach? Tell us your thoughts, memories and stories about the beach.

Moving right along... this week we feature our 15th editorial note writing contest winners on page 52. Congrats to our four winners and to all of you who took time to share a part of your life with us readers.

With that said, allow us to announce our 16th Editorial Note Writing Contest question! The topic to consider is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, are contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush.

The deadline, deadline will be Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006. As is the case with all of our contest, all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat WithOut) over several issues. And once all featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top vote getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders.

Before our final thoughts, lets give it up for this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) writers! They are, Mainy Hyena, M-Roy, Tay, Budda, Diamond, Stoneface, Chop, Lil' Soldier, Jw all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC we have Zoltan, Lysis, Qb, Lil' Cal, Mike, and Meen. From Santa Cruz we have Jessica and Young Writer. Last but not least we have Joseph from Arizona.

Although this week's editorial is written by the very thoughtful Nick Jones, this week's publication goes out to another important Beat person, who for the last year dropped mad honest game on us readers from Marin County Juvenile Hall. This person is Scorpion aka Dominic, who has just started work with us at The Beat Within. It is such an honor to have this powerful writer in our office. We see big things for this young man and we are excited to be apart of his latest chapter. Welcome to The Beat headquarters Dominic. What follows is his latest poem and intro written by the young man himself!

Dominic Scheer aka Scorpion, currently free and prowling the streets of San Francisco looking for his calling, is now employed at The Beat Within headquarters, wreaking havoc on their computers, pumping out poems so fast his keyboard dreads his presence. Previously incarcerated in Marin County Juvenile Hall for over a year, Dominic is drawing attention and pictures all day long. Here is just one of many pieces he wrote about a past relationship gone bad.

Remember
Remember when we used to dance?
Crazy and in love?
Do you remember the sexy things that you used to say?
When you wanted me to be yours
I can't tell you how much I miss you, baby
And how you grabbed my heart and clenched, squeezed
It's been awhile, and I saw your face behind my eyeballs
Shook my head like a tiger
Trying to shake the image of your beauty out of my mind
Just the thought of you makes me want to drop to my knees for you
Do some stupid shhh just to prove my love
Your fragrance injected into my brain like a narcotic
Causing drug induced movements
What is this feeling?
Is it legal?
Yes, and some call it love

Welcome Dominic, and we know in due time true love will be found.

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Forgotten Generation

We are the generation of the crack whore mother, the abusive father, the pimp for a brother, and have a drug dealer for a sister.

We are the statistics, we are the numbers,
We are the... we are the people of this planet.
We are your friends, we are your family, we... we are you.

I am now running down Destiny Lane
It's dark and cold, night had fallen hours ago.
I have been running for as long as I can
Remember, my body aches the pain is unbearable.
The fog has turned to rain, my clothes are wet and heavy.
My legs are moving, faster and faster...
I just passed eighteen going for nineteen.
I take a left at lockdown and take a breath.
I am now running for Freedom Street. I am getting closer...
Peace is only two blocks away followed by happiness. and content.
We are the generation of loving mothers, great fathers, helpful brothers, and happy sisters.
We are good, no... great people who will only make this planet, our planet a better place.
To my friends and family I miss you.

-Zoltan B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have a very distinctive style of writing, Zoltan, and it pulls us in and takes us for a ride along with you. Yes, we are all the things you've described, and each of us has within us the potential for all the evil that's ever been done in the world, and all the good! We are all human beings struggling on this little mud ball called Earth spinning through space. In this piece we think you have captured some of the heart of the greatest religions in the world, perhaps without even knowing it. We hope that you'll soon be able to shed those wet and heavy clothes for a new and lighter fit that suits you better. Thank you for this.

Complicated As You Make It

If you ask me, life is only complicated when you make it complicated. Like everyone that's in the halls right now made the decision to be here. It ain't nobody fault but yours. But some of us got life real complicated to where we have to go out there and hustle to support ourselves. Because our moms is on crack and then you get that state of mind like, "I'm not about to look like a bum no more!"

That's when it all starts. You see what the big homeys got and you thinking that's how I want to live life, but you don't think about the consequences that come with that lifestyle. So when you do get wrapped you start to think, "Is this really how I want to live life?"

I know for me life it's complicated as hell, especially with this probation BS. My mom is a recovering crack addict. My pops ain't never been there for me or my little bra. But I don't blame nobody but myself for keep coming back. Since I came here my first time I've been in and out. Then they sent me to a group home and I ran. Then I came back a week later.

Sometimes life gets too complicated for me, but I stay strong for my big bra. I know he wouldn't approve of the life I'm living but I stay strong for him (RIP Big Drama) because I looked up to him and he was strong, kept it moving whenever life had him down, So when I get out I'ma knock my six months out like it's nothing and get back to school because I refuse to be another statistic. I'ma prove the Juvenile system wrong. I'ma make something out of myself. I got big dreams to do something with myself, and I'ma follow through with them and collect these chullupas (money) — the legitimate way I do for big bra. RIP Big Drama, gone but never forgotten.

-Lil' Cal B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You know, Lil' Cal, we do put blame on some others for the path you were forced to choose (or so it seemed), because a parent's job is to protect their children, not to put their own desires ahead of their children's welfare. But having said that, we also agree with you that blaming others for the choices you've made doesn't relieve you either of your own responsibility or of the consequences. You have already seen that as clearly as we could say it, so the only lecture you get from us is RIGHT ON! Yes, getting that education is the key to getting out of the cage you're in, and of staying out of all cages in the future. Big Drama would be as proud of you as we are for seeing the light before it's too late, and for making some a conscious choice to take your life in a different direction. This is great!

Abuse

The abuse by my father happened for two years. He used to sexually abuse me and physically abuse me. He put me on the track and the whole time he had me on the track, if I didn't bring him enough money he would choke me out slap me and punch me.

Just a year ago he choked me out and he banged my head. He busted my head and busted my lip. Then he turned around and made me go to the track all in pain.

When I tried to tell my grandma, she said I am a lying you-know-what, and that I need to stop lying 'cause he is my father and he would never do that to me.

-Iysis GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It takes great courage for you to share these things with us, and we are more than grateful to you for trusting us. We are also brought low when we read about these terrible, terrible things that happened to you, Iysis. It truly makes us cry when we think about anyone who calls himself a "father" doing this to his child. Your grandmother was reacting to protect her son and not you, and that is equally shameful! We don't know where your father is now, or whether you've told other adults about his crime — and make no mistake, what he did is a crime — but we hope he is not abusing any other girls the way he's abused you. You have been betrayed by the man whose job it was to protect you and keep you safe, and there is no worse betrayal in the world. You have tremendous strength to be able to deal with it, but don't think you can deal with it all by yourself. There are people who can help you with your memories, and support you where you need support. We encourage you to keep writing about what you've been through, but also to keep talking to people about it.

I been locked up too many times and this time some'un clicked. I'm through wit' slangin' an' bangin'.

Complicated

My life got complicated the first time I picked up a gun. When I first used it I began to think I was untouchable. I began robbin' people, pullin' house licks, and the worst of all, I started hustling on the block. That led me to being in the beef, because I started doing things to get my name out there.

I been locked up too many times and this time something clicked. I'm through wit' slangin' an bangin'.

When I get out, I'm gonna be on the straight solo bolo. If you ain't doin' nuthin' positive, I ain't messin' witcha. I know I'm to blame for mostly everything bad that happened in my life. Nobody played me; I played myself for putting myself in situations to get locked up. I'm finna go to Pennsylvania and handle my business. One love, Beat!

-Q-B B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a terrific piece of writing — the product of a terrific piece of thinking! If the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and expecting a different result, then you are the picture of sanity because you have seen the connection between cause and effect, and you have decided to break the circle. This shows such maturity that we hope you get as much as you can from the Mills and then come back and teach. You have all that it takes to be a great leader, starting with leading yourself. Keep writing us from wherever you are and give us the knowledge you're getting. We'll miss you in these pages unless you keep spittin' game our way. Thank you.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Complicated

I feel my life had always been complicated since I have always had problems. I've been in and out of foster/ group homes since I was 16 month, but I have always managed. Why? Because someone has always been there to help me, be it my brother, friends or nor real (but real) family. Like my grandparents. They have always been there for me.

Also, my complicated life mostly started when I started thinking I was too hard. I have always been able to handle myself. But I felt like I had to prove it to somebody, which I don't, and I know that now. But once that happened, I made dumb-ass decisions, which weren't good for nobody.

And my felonies started stacking up, which complicated my mind, by not knowing what to do and messing up even more. Now I'm so far in this, I could get sent to the Ranch or YA, if I mess up again, which I won't do, because I'm being sober. And I will continue to be sober because drugs mess with your mind, play games with you.

And my complications are winding down, because I'm gone man up and take care of my shhh, like I should have done in the first place. Also I will live a regular life — crime free — because, really, drugs, crime, and trying to prove myself is what complicated my life. I'm stopping all of that because I'm going to be my own man and restart my life.

-Mike B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We've seen it over and over in The Beat, Mike. Some people mature faster than others and by so doing, they save themselves a lifetime of grief. You show how mature you are in this terrific piece! We want to stress what you've already realized about drugs, and that is they put you under control of something other than your own good sense, and that leads to all manner of difficulties. Don't fall for the temptation on the outs that you can do "just a little," because it never ends that way, even if you sincerely want it to. This wonderful piece is the consequence of a sober, thoughtful mind that is once again firmly in control. Don't lose that control. Keep traveling the path that you've started and there is no limit to what you are able to accomplish. Besides staying drug free, what is your plan for achieving those things that are in your power to achieve?

I'm being sober. And I will continue to be sober because drugs mess with your mind, play games with you.

Room Search

Right now, as I write, the staff is doing a room search. As I look back towards my cell, I hope they don't go in my room! My heart is pounding! I worry he (staff) will find my candy — sour patches, watermelon.

If he find' it, I get an hour — an hour in my room during rec' time. The candy, right now, is on the side of my mattress. Yeah, candy is seen as contraband. The candy has my name on it, too! Dude next to me got caught with three packets of sugar, and he may lose "top citizen" status. Oh no, shhh! Staff is in my room right now! I'm nervous. It's been a minute since I had room time, three or four weeks.

Staff just came out of my room — nothing in his hand! Will I get away with it? Or will he go back into my room and still find my Watermelon Sour Patches?

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, this is a most entertaining story to read, even if it wasn't all that entertaining for you to write it. Candy is contraband. Oh well, it looks like you got away with having your little stash of sour patches to sweeten the end of your day. We know our readers feel you when they read this little piece. Peace.

There is Hope for Me

Is there hope for this world?
Is there hope for that boy or girl?
Is there hope in the war?
Is there hope to be no more?
What is hope to me and you?
What is the hope supposed to do?
Why does the judge give two years?
Does he mean my family to be in tears?
What about that little boy?
What did he do to lose his joy?
Why does this have to be?
Why can't he just be set free?
What is it that he did?
What made the man leave his kid?
The boy is lost.
Not having a father cost.
A son to look up to no one but himself
Not worrying about fortune or wealth.
No hope, but yet a fire.
Burning inside like a desire.
Push throughout these years.
Pain, torture, horror, standing for years
But hope keeps going
And I'm still not knowing
Is there hope for me?

-Joseph, Durango, Maricopa County Arizona

From The Beat: Losing a parent because they make choices we don't understand is difficult. But you can overcome it. You have the desire to change and that does make hope for you. You have a gift for writing, and this sounds like it could be a rap. Keep letting it out through your writing and take your own advice for hope.

Criminal

"He's a well-thought out, thorough criminal." –DA

Is that a compliment or are you disrespecting me? What is it saying, that I'm good at stealing? Like taking stuff from people is a good quality or something.

But that ain't what I like to do. What I do is put pencil to paper and go bad in black and white. An artist's hand is what I'm dealt. That's my talent, not strippin' people for they goods. It's nothing to be proud of.

And if I'm so damned thought out and thorough how the hell did I get caught?

I'm not stupid. I go dumb, but I'm not stupid. I can't make a living off theft if I keep getting locked up.

"No, he's an immature , impulsive criminal."

But either way, I'm a goddamn criminal! Wow.

-Mainy Hyena, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well, after taking the DA's assessment of you to heart at Beat Headquarters, we've established that two out of three ain't bad. As an artist, you ARE thorough and well-thought out. And since you're also a writer, you know that you're the only one who has the power to write your life story, and to decide who and what you are, or whether or not you're going to end up a criminal. Somehow, looking at the talent that goes into your prose, we doubt it.

Love

Love is the feeling that you don't want to let go of.
Well I don't want to let go.
I love being loved by the one who loves to be loved.
Love is a positive thing that gets you farther in life.
Love is like the wind –
you can feel it but you can't hold it or control it.

-M-Roy, 150 Crew

From The Beat; What a beautifully written piece. We think you captured the essence and complexities of that crazy thing called love. We all need it, want it and look for it but sometimes just can't seem to hold on to it.

You're All A-Holes But Me

The Beat got their whole point of view twisted and think like some damn dogs. Always following the law and can't think for your damn selves. As I've been reading all your bs responses, I noticed something. Every time someone says, "I'm gonna do good and go to college," y'all say some shhh like, "Hip-hip hooray, we believe you!" Every time someone says, "They can't change me," or, "I can't help it, I'm stuck for life," or some shhh like that, y'all say, "Well go ahead. You're gonna end up right back in here!" It's true but it's kind of funny, 'cause every time the police would come by where I stay at and see us hella deep, they would give us that look, like a smirk or some shhh. And every time they had a reason to mess with us, they would say, "You stupid ass... Y'all ain't going nowhere. You guys have no life. You ghetto bastards. I made it and you are gonna end up in jail, you hoodlums! You guys are disgraces!" but the would say all this with a hate so deep, and y'all tellin' us the same damn shhh!

Every time someone says the system is playin' us, y'all say, "No, you let the system play you," or "You played yourself." No, that's not true. Y'all ignorant bastards is tryin' to discourage the people, us people. The Beat is phony and fake, and some scared-ass sissies.

The system IS trying to play us! And either The Beat is scared, maybe in favor of the government's movement to play us all and put us in modern slave camps; to a certain extent brainwashed and ignorant just as they consider us ignorant. Either way, I say FORGET THE BEAT! Only thing that is actually useful is the fact that we get to read each other's shhh, and know what's up with other people in other facilities.

Well, anyways, why is it that's all over California there are nothing but blacks and browns? Are we really just ignorant people? Is it really that the cause of us "letting ourselves" be put in prisons that pus us in prisons? Maybe yep. We actually do commit the crimes. But... why do we commit the crimes in the first place? Our fault to, right? I mean, the government didn't make us join up a set or a gang. If we wanted to be good citizens we have the choice and right to do so. Yet we end up joining a gang anyway. But how did it all happen? Why are thousands and thousands of blacks and browns gangbangers? We chose to be gang members, but why aren't all these Asian people and white people in all sorts of gangs like us?

Why is the percentage of Latino and black gang members so much higher than whites and Asians? It's because we grew up in that environment. I want every Latino and black person to sit and think what kind of life they had growing up. I bet none one person can say that a drug dealer or gangbanger didn't live within one block of your house. Nobody say they went to school without at least ten gang bangers attending there, or half the school from different sets.

Almost everybody in here is from somewhere, and if everyone answered "yes" on that drug dealer or gang member shhh, then there is a lot of drugs and guns in our neighborhoods. I don't even want to think about how they got here, and why it's so easy to get. But why do we grow up in these places like this in the first place? Why do all of us get released from society and into ghettos and 'hoods? Maybe our moms or dads were crackheads who never made it because the chance was never there. But why us? Just 'cause our parents messed up or didn't get good enough jobs. Why we gotta be crammed into apartment buildings and dirty neighborhoods that stay dirty and unnoticed?

The government's smart enough to figure out cures to diseases, cures to sicknesses, how to save endangered species and how to keep a whole country functioning "properly" without bankruptcy and how they even got a world movement on how to stop air pollution and save energy. They got scientists who figured out that if an object goes faster than the speed of light then it gets infinitely long and all that shhh. Figured out how to build a spaceship that can go into outer space, to the moon and back. But for some damn reason, they can't figure out how to fix the worldwide spread disease of poverty and third-world countries.

This shhh is just so freakin' amazing. Racism still exists! That's why over — way over half of all black and Latinos are crackheads, jailed prisoners, gang members, drug dealers and people without jobs. Because they have no intentions to help us. Like I have mentioned before, they have figured out a way to abide by their own laws and still mess us over. Nobody can deny that they don't give a shhh about us, and they actually plan on us to keep messing up so we can fill up those 15 brand new prisons here. The whole economy of California would be ruined if everyone just stopped getting locked up. Isn't that messed up? If we all did good and do what we were supposed to do in the first place, the state would lose money. Something ain't right in this picture and us "rejects" that's dying left and right need to do something about this.

For how much longer will we be claiming this and that until the oppressor blindly eliminates us all? Open your eyes, my people. We think being in gangs and shhh is some grown man shhh, but the government is just giving us guns and stepping back to watch us kill each other. It's time to fight back! We can never go nowhere unless we share with each other. Forget all that "I need to get paid and eat" type of shhh. Would you rather starve for one night or help to slowly kill about 20-30 crackheads a night? Every time we sell a rock, every time we shoot someone, every time we jack or hit someone, we hurtin' and killin' ourselves as a people.

And the people that live end up where? In here or in prisons! Well, shhh! I gotta go. And tell me you ignorant-ass Beat sissies, that the system ain't trying to play us! Viva la revolucion!

-Meen B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Despite your anger at The Beat, and all the names you call us, we're giving you a Piece Of the Week for thinking, for getting under the surface of things, and for raising some truly important points — some of which we thoroughly agree with, and some of which we don't. You make some sweeping generalizations here, Meen, and some major assumptions about people you really know nothing about. You have no idea what any of us at The Beat has lived through, where any of us has been, what any of us has experienced, yet you assume you know all. You have no way of knowing who's been locked up, who's faced possible life sentences and come through it, who's watched friends die in the gas chamber, who's been assaulted by government agents, who's had to run for their lives from bullets coming out of guns held by cops. You don't know whose on the FBI's lists of people to watch, or why... or really anything at all, and yet you pretend to know everything there is to know about us. That is the basis of prejudice (judging before you know), and it rests on a foundation of ignorance. The good thing about ignorance (as distinct from stupidity) is that it can be overcome through education and experience — through learning things you haven't even thought about yet! You're far from stupid, so we are 100% sure that experience will temper your youthful certainties about things, just as experience has tempered ours. When we urge our writers to take responsibility for their actions, it is because we hope they can learn from the mistakes (and successes) of others. Maybe it's true that nobody can learn except through their own mistakes, but still we hope you can avoid some of the ones we've made along the way and thus escape some of the costs. And yes, we've made them, and we've paid them! Is it possible — just possible — that Meen may be wrong, and The Beat may be right? If you can't tell the difference between cops telling you you'll never make it, and our telling you that you can, that you hold the power in your hands, then you haven't been reading with an open mind, because if you were, you'd see that we don't say the system isn't playing you, we only say that you are helping the system to play you by giving them power over your life, and that without acknowledging your own shared responsibility, you'll always be in a position to point the finger at someone else. It's not that the system is righteous. It isn't. It's only that recognizing how shady the system is in no way relieves you of your own choices and your own responsibility. As for racism, of course it exists, but where does that recognition take you? Does it surprise you to know there are more white people on death row than either black or brown people? Or that some of the most violent street gangs of all are Asian? Or that you are wrong about your statistics that way over half of blacks and Latinos are "failing." Do you even believe us, or are you so comfortable with what you think you know that you're not interested in facts to disturb your "knowledge"? One thing you're 100% right about: the government bears a huge responsibility for failing all of you, and for failing to live up to its basic promises as written in the Preamble of the Constitution ("We, the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect union, establish justice..."). Oh yes, in no way can the government be let off the hook. But unfortunately, saying that doesn't move you out of here, and that's why we keep telling you (and all the "yous") to start looking inward because this government will not change its ways. It was born in violence and oppression and destruction of Native Americans, and it has continued down that dark historical path ever since (at the same time guaranteeing us the right to say so). But it's just not enough to see that, or even to hate them for it. We see no chance for revolution here because too many people are fat and happy (and too many of the would-be revolutionaries are busy killing themselves instead of organizing themselves and educating themselves.) A revolution also requires educated and charismatic leadership. You have the potential to be among those that provide that leadership, Meen, but only if you get your anger under control and channel it. There are many reasons to be angry, but the job of a leader is to find common cause with as many as s/he can to form alliances, coalitions and collectives of people who can put minor differences aside in order to achieve major objectives. You can hate on the government and on The Beat as much as you like, but where does it lead you? So what else do we have but to hope that change comes from each individual, one by one? If you know the answer to that question, we are eager — even desperate — to know it too.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Read What's Real

Why do what you do bra?
why do we sell drugs or pimp
or do what you do to get fast money?
Do you like the fame, the girls, the money?
I know I love to sell drugs
because I need the money
it's fun and I just love to do it
the getting' fast money
cashin' out for anything
I want the respect
the attention.
Ever since I was little I loved to get money
I don't have the patience for a job.
I don't have the patience to stay in school.
So I smoke, pop, and drink.
And get money, but for what?
to be here sober, writing about what I do on the outs?
While I'm here to be set up by them boys and a knock
that I be servin'
to have moms cryin'
to be arrested in front of all the people
I try to impress.
To go down with just what I have on
and lots of money that I can't spend while I'm in here
why do what I do
why do what you do,
think about it bra.

-Budda, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know where your head is at, if you are ready to make the turn for the better, but what you write in this issue is so deep. You ask the million dollar questions, but what is the answers? Continue to think about all the humiliation you put yourself and your mother through, isn't that enough to change? Forget money! Learn how to embrace school, gain a legit job, and live free of drama! IN the end you will be at peace. How you are living is no way for any teenager to live.

Damage

My heart is my window.
It's been damaged by my history
and thieves who tried to vandalize my soul
when they thought it was asleep.
I feel myself falling through my fingers
like grains of sand. My only relief
is when I breathe in the energy of faith.

-Jessica, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Beautiful piece. This is the second time you've come through with your poetry. We hope you'll continue. What a great line – thieves who tried to vandalize your soul. Many thanks

Bless Me

I say bless me with a generation with no enemies
But instead we get put out of our misery
With lying, stealing, and plenty thieves
We have so many people pretending to be inhuman
To changing positively
We see so many children with incomplete dreams
Because of all their heroes that are simply street fiends
I believe wisdom is something that only comes with time
But what if wisdom was something that could be purchased online
Or what if time could be a DVD you could rewind
Would it be a positive thing or would we use it for a disguise?
And what about the others out there with crying eyes
Scared to read between the lines
Because there so much pain to find
Or what about the younger siblings
Following the lines
Behind all of the influenced wrong doing
Of the supposed to be responsible, always relievable, limitation suppliers, also know as parents, guardians and all of the above
What happened to the days when it was supposedly all about love? Why did the young black women take so long to find out that they hate being in love with a thug?
Or why can't our young black man get off the corners and help support our rise above club?
And see, I said bless me
With a generation with no enemies
But instead we get put out of our misery
With lying, stealing, and plenty thieves
We have so many people pretending to be inhuman
To changing positively
We see so many children
With incomplete dreams because of all their heroes who are simply street fiends
Its time to fill our minds with complete dreams
That become complete things
That can sweep the streets clean
And if it sweeps the streets clean
Then the kids can play outside
With no drugs
And more lived
And more eyes
That are uncried.

-Diamond, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Diamond, you hit the nail on the head. The dreams of this generation are limiting it's potential. Who is a good role-model for this generation? E-40, going dumb? It's really hard to see how we got to where we are, but one thing for sure is – we didn't get here overnight. The only way to help the next generation is to help ourselves. We must stop living for the instant gratification. Not only is it bringing many of us to jail, but what will it do to our next generation? You are a great voice of positivity! What are you doing to help our community and what are you doing to help yourself? Bless us - What we can we do? Stay positive! Great piece.

I write in a diary where no one knows my name — where there's no one to point to, to blame

Sometimes . . . .

Sometimes it's so hard to open my mouth.
When a month of no voice comes
people start to freak out.
It might, possibly, be my strongest tool -
if I keep this vision inside my mind.
The clock ticks by. I might lose my time,
like little ants working hopelessly for the queen.
So I write in a diary where no one knows my name –
where there's no one to point to, to blame.
Though the shape of my mind begins to change.
But the ideas I cannot pursue drive me insane.

-Young writer, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We wish you'd claim ownership of this fine piece. To have a voice doesn't necessarily mean to speak. Writers have voices, and until someone reads their words on a page, even the written words are silent.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Growin' Up

Growin' up growin' up in this life that we live.
Growin' up growin' up watchin' kids havin' kids.
Growin' up in these hard times we live in.
Growin' up watchin' kids killin' kids.

In this life that we live its so hard growing up in the ghetto
Don't know where to go.
In and out of foster homes, group homes and the pen too.
For you kids with no father, hold your head up high.
For you mothers on your own, keep your head up high.
All the stress and the pain will pass by.

Growin' up growin' up in this life that we live.
Growin' up growin' up watchin' kids havin' kids.
Growin' up in these hard times we live in.
Growin' up watchin' kids killin' kids.

In this life that we live in it gets harder every day.
More mothers on there own, more dads get put away.
More schools get tore down and jails build in they place.
More cops get put on duty, more mothers on welfare.

-Jw, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well put J. You hit on some pretty serious points about what's happening right now in neighborhoods all of the country, not just here in the Bay. More and more young people are neglecting their responsibilities as students, parents and members of a larger community. More young people are headed to jail than to school it seems and more people are struggling to find jobs. We hope this serves as a motivation to do better by yourself and the people you love, cause it's so easy to say f it and give up. We know you have it in you so put your skills to the test. Don't just be a man of words, be a man of action.

Would Everything Be Different?

Man if I could do a do over in life it would be going into that house or just not going wit' my patna, knowing it was not coo'. Something else that I want to do over is having sex with a girl that I did not want to know. She gave a ninja some shhhh that was not coo'.

Something else that I would want to do over is goin' back to my first placement because if I would have stayed and be at home right now. Maybe the girl that I got pregnant would have never left with my kid. The bad part about it is that I don't even know if she keeped the baby so I don't know if I got a baby.

That's it. I'm out. Oh, and this is my last time writing. Ha ha ha.

-Stoneface, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well we are sad to know this your last piece but happy as hell that you are getting out. We know it's been a rough few weeks so going home will feel extra good. Life is tricky – yes if one thing was changed in the past a whole lot of other things would be different, for better or for worse. But we would all go crazy if we thought like this. The only thing you can do is learn from your mistakes and not repeat them.

Why Did You Have To Leave Us?

I was only six years old when you left me.
I was just a lil' boy.
You didn't only leave me behind,
you left my brother who was ten,
my sister who was eight,
and my youngest sister who was only eleven months old.
It really hurts that now you're gone.
Now we got to remember you through pictures,
well, at least me and my youngest sister,
because we were too young to remember you.
When I used to be at the hut,
I would just look at your beautiful face through pictures.
Now that I'm locked up,
I can't even do that.
I have nothing.
All I have is your face pictured in my mind.
I miss you.
I wish you were still here.
When you left, you didn't go alone.
My father left us too.
He went to prison.
But I'm happy for you now.
You are in a better place.
One day, we will all reunite and once again
be together as a family.
RIP Mom.

-Lil' Soldier, 15 0Crew

From The Beat: This prose/poem ('cause it's written in grammatically correct complete sentences and without rhyme, like prose, but with the condensation of thought and intensity of emotion typical of lyrical poetry) is so powerful. The balance of narrative detail and heartfelt confession of feeling is perfect, maximizing the impact of your words. Great writing from a generous if deeply wounded heart. We're sure your mother's spirit is brightened by your love, even if her eyes cloud over and rain tears of grief.

What's Really Happening In The Streets?

Man, I can't even go to school without being harassed by the five-oh! It seems like every time you look up or bend a corner, you see a black-and -white car with the blueberries and strawberries on top! You ever feel the more you try to do good, the more wrong you are? Yes, you have. Why? I'll tell you why: it's called "the lunch system".

John Lynch or George Lynch, whatever his name is, says the African-Americans, blacks, peoples of African decent (whatever you call us, besides "niggas"), are supposed to fail. By fail, I'm basically saying that if my people don't kill me, I should be in jail for killin' them or for selling the drugs that others brought to this country. What do you think we make it over here? No, they bring it from overseas, so that the gangsters can go to jail for havin' it, and when I say "they" I'm not only talkin' about the blacks that go to jail. Use this as an example: Why do you think they take millions of dollars and give it to the correctional facilities instead of giving it to public schools like they should? Because they know that the thugs and gangsters can't afford private school!

I guess we're not good enough for school — we belong in prison! But why? Because the color of our skins? But hey, some of us are the same color as they are! Or maybe it's because we're immigrants? But if you think about it, they are immigrants, too! So what makes them so much better then we are? I got the answer to that, too: It's because they're smart enough to find a way to hurry up and get us the drugs — so they won't have them anymore! They find ways to kill us off, to where they won't end up locked up for it. They find ways to afford private school.

So what's left for us to do, is to play their game the right way: Learn to become presidents.

-Chop, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even if you paint your "they" with a broad brush, if by "they" you mean a group intentionally perpetrating these undeniable injustices, the overall picture you portray is undeniably true. To be sure, there are groups specifically interested in accomplishing what you say, but the overwhelming force comes from misinformation and political manipulation of self-interest — selling the American dream to some seems to include relegating others (most of the planet but also any potentially revolutionary cadre within our borders) to subsistence existence as a cheap labor pool — domestically only neo-slave prison labor can compete with cheap labor abroad. Whatever the analysis, your solution is spot-on! Play "their" game the right way and turn the self-same political machinery into a tool of the people to restore democratic vistas to the American dream. Thanks for an outstanding, informative, conscious and persuasive piece!

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

This Complicated Life

What up Beat this Lil' Ant comin from that Hayward life.

My life had started getting complicated when I was 11 years old. I started smoking and drinking and getting into trouble in the streets.

When I was about 12 I started gang banging, that were it started getting very complicated. I was starting to get into fights, and people were shooting at me.

When I was about 12 and a half I went to juvenile hall for my first time for vandalism. From there on, it went down hill.

When I was thirteen I started seeing friends die and the people I love going away.

I never really thought my life would end up like this but it did. I am now 17 years old and with a 10 and a half month old son, and I can't even take care of myself.

From my early teens I have been in and out of correctional facilities. One of my closest homeboys was murdered earlier this year. His name was Arturo Romero may his soul rest in peace. And to who ever took him out the game screw you!

I just wanted to say that this life ain't worth it. But once you're in, you can never get out. I am in here right now for selling drugs, driving without a license, and a 211 warrant. When I finally get out I have to get my life together and take care of my son and family and friends.

To all doing time in Max, CYA, camp, and in the Hall, stay up and keep yo head up. This Lil' Ant letting y'all know I'm out.

RIP Arturo Romero 1989 – 2006, One love.

-Lil' Ant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your teenage years have been very complicated, thanks to poor choices and from the poor choice you falling prey to the system. You don't mention your parents, so we wonder what type of role they have in the direction you are heading/have lead? Are they supportive? You have plenty at stake when you get home, your child! We hope you have it in you in the name of your child and your homie Arturo (RIP) to live a life free of crime. What's your plan? Hope in your plan you will step up to the plate and leave the bullshhh!

The Happy Times With My Little Brother

I think back to all the times that me and my little brother had. We has so much fun last year before I got locked up. We went to all the parties, had all the girls, we was really doin' our thang. But it was times when we was down and we would cheer each other up.

My little brother's name was Lil' Meech. Everybody knew my bra. They knew we got down to the fullest. My bra used to dance -- he loved it so much that that was his life. I loved my brother dance because nobody could mess with him. I miss him a lot. I can't go a day without talkin' 'bout him to someone.

He had got shot in Oakland. I didn't even know until my mom came and told me that my lil' bra Meech .

I was so sad that day I could not believe that had happened to my little brother. But I will always think back to the happy that me and my little brother Lil' Meech. I cry every night thinking but I know he's in a better place. So I love you with all my heart my lil' brother Lil' Meech.

-Lamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We never met your little brother, but you bring his spirit to life in this piece – we can see a boy, all heart, dancing in the thick of a crowded room, with a circle of people cheering around him, and the image is a happy one. We know that missing him must feel like having lost an arm, or worse, but thank you for bringing him to life, for a minute with the love that shows through in your words. End the violence.

Dear Moms

Just wonderin' how you feeling.
I'm just here in the dark looking up at the ceiling,
and I've been thinking about you last night.
They locked us down because some dudes had a fight.
I was hoping everything is all good.
Thinking about you and my family and everybody in my hood.
You tell me to stay out jail and I know I should.
But let's talk about the good stuff how's Lil' Pootie is he still bad
He's only one year old and he's making his momma hella mad.
And how's she doing is she still cool --tell her that her little brother is still acting a fool,
I miss her and my brother -- when I get out we all gon' be chillin' with' each other
...smokin' big.
Mom I will always love you.

-Big Joe, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We love the way this letter-poem goes back and forth between what you go through in jail and the day-to-day troubles of being in a family that your letter is trying to reach out to. It's heartbreaking and heartwarming at the same time – but the key is 'heart'. Our only question – when you say "smokin' big"... it's a cold hard world out there (you know it first hand) and though smoking and drinking are "fun," meaning they distract from the pain, they also dull your wits, slow your motivation, cost you money, and make you lose focus. You need all your mental strength to make it – don't let anything mess with your mental strength!

Cheating #2

J-T: Girl, you don't love me!
Girl: Why you say that?
J-T: You know why!
Girl: Why are you doing this to me?
J-T: Why am I doing this to you? You did it to me!
Girl: Baby, I'm sorry.
J-T: Get away from me and stop all of that goddamn crying, girl.
Girl: I can't, baby!
J-T: I'm not your baby. Girl, let me tell you something: I love you with all of my heart, and there isn't anything in this world that can stop me from loving you, but what you did wasn't right. Just tell me, what am I doing wrong?
Girl: Nothing, I don't ... don't know what I was thinking.
J-T: That's because you wasn't thinking!
Girl: You said we was going to be together forever.
J-T: I guess I was wrong. Now get the hell out my goddamn house!
Girl: This is my house, too!
J-T: I'll leave then.
Girl: Please, baby, don't go! Don't go!
J-T: Why me? Why can't I just find someone that want do me wrong? Why can't I just settle down like everybody else? Do you understand that all I want is to be happy? I care for you and always will, but right now, I'm hurting hella bad — and I can't stand to look at you one more second!
Girl: Baby....
J-T: Baby, nothing! I'm gone. Call me when you've really thought about what you've done.
Girl: But, baby....
J-T: I'm gone.

-Lil' J-T, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like the wound is deep but so is the love. Just as you say, for now it's beyond endurance, the pain your love is costing you 'cause of what she chose to do. However, if she can stay true and wait for you, it sounds like you're heart is sure to repair itself, too; at least to the point of giving love (and forgiveness) its due. Yet pain makes a heart blind and blocks the mind from seeing a better future. Then again, your love starts to move you back to her, your mind and heart ask, "How can you be sure?" You never can, but is that a reason never to love again?

I Have A Plan

My life a complicated one. How did it get this way? Why did I let it get this way? I lived in the jets most of my life. I had to fight or be punked, and nobody wants to be a punk! I turned to my homies when I was young, and we ran together, fought with each other.

Then, when I got older, I ran by myself. It keeps getting more complicated day by day. But I know I can find my way out of things. All I have to do is put my mind to something and bam, I could do it. But I put my mind to the streets and with the streets came dope, hop, weed, guns, girls, cars, money, pills, drank, the talk, killings. It's all a part of the streets, and it's all complicated!

But now I have to plan that I'ma stick to, and I'ma put my mind to it. And I bet you I do it, because I'm not just living for myself, I'm living for my unborn child. Its gone be complicated, but hey, life is complicated.

Keep ya head up!

-Cash B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We would never bet against anyone who says they're going to make it! We put our money on you! Realizing that you're not just living for yourself should be enough motivation to drive you towards your goals and to reach your potential. Can you share some of the details of your plan? Does it include school? Work? Sobriety? We hope you've thought of all those things, and more.

Wishes

I have lots of wishes
I wish I didn't have to go through these things
Wishes
I wish I could go back in time
Wishes
I wish I could stop the grind
'Cause there is some wishes of mines
I wish I could be a good father
To my one and only daughter
I wish I was smarter
To not go further
I wish I could see my mother
I wish I could be a big brother
But it keeps happenin' one after the other
Date some mores wish I smother
Wish
I wish the people I love wasn't in ditches
I wish I didn't hurt all their itches
I wish my feelings was enough
I wish I had something else to think of
Instead of drugs in that hood
I wish when they hear my name everythang was good
Wishes
These is all my wishes.

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: And here are our wishes. We wish that this great talent and heart you show in your writing will continue to grow. We wish that one day, we see you walking down the street, with a bright eyed little girl holding your hand, and you're both smiling. Maybe you're taking her to school on your way to work at a job you love. Maybe you're taking her to the park. We wish that you become living proof that a young man can change his ways and rise above the streets. And here's one last wish: We wish that you understand that our wishes aren't just wishes but beliefs, because we believe in you and we believe that you can make them come true.

What The Hell . . .

Damn
Here I am
Once again in this shhh-hole
For the seventh time since November
Not even thinkin' 'bout how mom's feeling last time
Nor do I want to remember
Day after day, time after time
My mind and soul are deaf and blind
Tears falling down my cheeks
Blood dripping from my ears
Hoping this is the last time
That I'll ever run from my petty, messed up fears
I'm not who I used to be
Nor will I ever be again
I did the wrong thing
Followed in the footsteps of the wrong person
Tweaking for weeks at once
Chuggin' beer after beer
Doing it over and over again
Knowing every second that death is near
For all the shadows in the corners
And voices in my head
For every broken promise and ghetto lie
That has ever been said
For every human who's been taken advantage of
For all the homies who've been taken my God
To the heavens above
For all the little and older children
And adults who never got a hug
And for every tear that's been cried out of true love
I've been there, I've done that
And yet I'm still stuck in the system's satanic trap
I'm still sittin' here
Waitin' to find my place
Hopin' I'll get the meat back
In my sucked-up face
Trying to look out this 8-by-6 block window
And I can't see out
And that's something I perfectly well know

-Nagy, Marin

From The Beat: What a piece of work you deliver this week! Is the worst part of being back in juvy the fact that you're trapped in your room with only your mind to distract and comfort you? Do you need some new ideas to deal with whatever's going on in your life? Do you trust anyone in your family, a counselor, that you can talk to? Maybe a new perspective for the same ol' problems would help? Please ask for any help you think you need/want!

That Rock Bottom

Life in prison is rock bottom to me because it is no way out. You have to live your whole life in prison and no one wants to live their whole life in prison. Anybody in prison right now would want to be free because livin' in a cell is not a home for a human being. A cell is used to cage up people; even in a long period of time a human would change his life just to be out with his/her friends or family. Rock bottom is your life gone forever. A drug addict has a better chance than a person in prison because there's no coming back from a life in prison.

-M, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You speak with a lot of heart and frustration. Prisons are about the loss of freedom and the inability to control your own life like going to the bathroom or opening doors. We agree that losing your freedom forever is definitely hitting bottom. But this place can teach you a lot. It sounds like being here has taught you something, even if it's knowing where you don't want to be. Addicts live in their own sort of prisons and we'd bet there are some addicts out there who would rather be in prison than on the outs living the way they live.

A drug addict has a better chance than a person in prison because there's no coming back from a life in prison.

My Escape

I put my hands in my invisible pockets,
my breath full of disappointment.
I look at the sand everyday.
Thieves have taken my freedom
so I escape reality by sleeping.
Anxiety makes my fingers sweat.
I wish I could change my history
so I could get relief.
The only faith I have
is looking out the window.

-Teresa, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Fine poem Teresa. We hope you'll continue to write when you are released. This is good stuff.

Growing up I went through so much b-s, that I ended up with no feelings

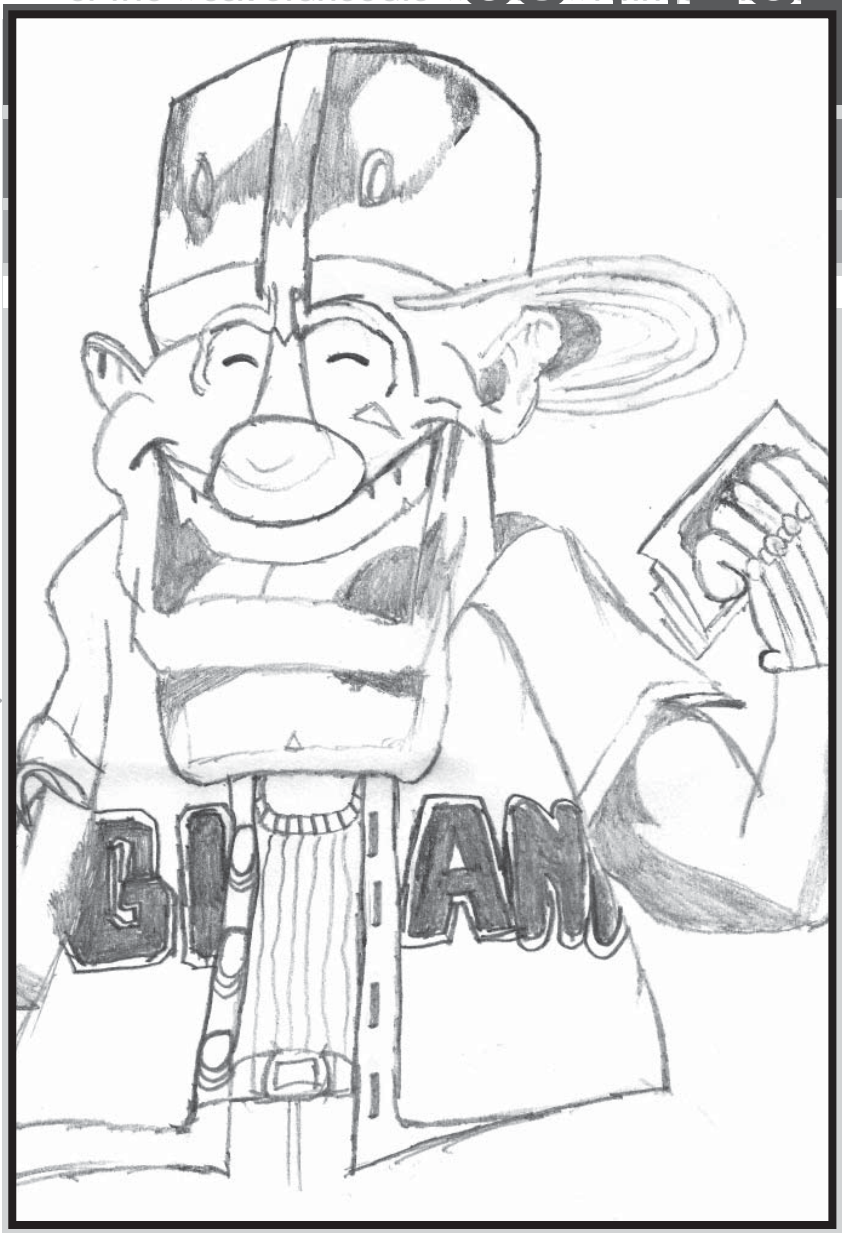
Reasons

The last reason to be a thug is hold your ground
and put it down, in las calles (the streets) where you live.
Lets give thought to the twelfth
In your mind picture wealth
Getting our slang on strong for your family and your health
We break dough how we role up in this hustle game
Just for a few reasons I won't explain
Razón numero once, es algo que conoces
(Reason number ll is something that you know)
Union entre pandillas (gangs sticking together) living that thug vida
Some are with it, others choose to go broke
Respeto for homies that pull the gun smoke
Que no? you know the deal always keep it real
Razón numero diez, (Reason number 10) pack your cold steal
'Cause they will catch you slippin'
And they will pop their clips in
And these are the reasons why us homies be trippin'
I break it down to number nine
This is one you keep in mind
Put in work to pay your dues
Remember always role with trues
Numero ocho (number 8) should be something that we prove
Like moving these celdas (cells(as the homies proudly do
Breaking foo's left and right
When I explain it comes tights
Living life as gang members, catch you slippin' do you right
Some get to see the inside others don't participate
Reason number seven is to get out all the hate that we create, while growing tall
End up not caring at all
Temper's a hair trigger, that's why vatos learn not to fall
To leave the scene number six is for the fiend
Addicted like a clucker to this gangsta dream
You see what we do is jump in to the neck
And I'm bringing it real so what you see is what you get
Number five, never hide and take it with you when you ride
In Spanish it's orgullo, in English they call it pride
I'ma drop this last verse
Don't forget that I'm the first to bring the curse of pistolas and that super sport hearse
There's a couple more racónes but before I get to that,
know that all of us homies never hesitate to snap, just like that.
Now you know, here comes number four
Is survive on these streets 'cause the stalk you hardcore
So watch them close, eventually they'll creep
And if I'm not mistaken we're on reason number three
Now you know all the rules,
but this one makes you choose
It's the seed that gets planted and grows while you pay dues
So who's down with their pride, number two can't be denied
So I'ma let lacras (suckers) know this is the thug life
Porque (because) we don't hide nothing like the rest of them
What we can't handle with wordswe handle with balas (bullets)
La primera racón (the first reason) is to have corazón (heart)
And if your hood ain't respected ahi te haces carbon (then you become a punk)

-Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: If we were judging this piece purely on the skills and artistry of your writing, it would certainly be a piece of the week. But to promote what you are promoting... well, we just can't do that. The trouble we have in responding to you, Goofy, is that there is nothing we can say that you have not already thought of — and disposed of. You know the potential consequences of your actions because you have bullet holes all through your arms and chest. You realize that you could spend all of your life without ever seeing the moon or the stars again, behind impenetrable bars, and you've decided it's all worth it (or, perhaps, when you fall back into the thinking of a child, you believe it won't happen to you...) And it's exactly because of how smart you are and how creatively you express yourself that we sometimes sit with you and beg you to rethink your life. Yes, we do this out of a concern for you and your future; but we also do it out of a concern for ourselves and our future. We know just how few people there are who ever think about things seriously, who have the talent to analyze and realize and understand — who have the potential to be great leaders of men and women who have the greatest need for great leaders (namely, our entire society)! And yet we also know that you risk everything you have — your freedom and your very existence — by the lifestyle you celebrate here, and that such a loss would be too great to bear. We have a challenge for you, señor... We would like you to put your very impressive talents to work writing a piece called: "Reasons Not To Be A Thug." We know you've thought about those reasons and we know you could craft something great (even if you are not persuaded by your own words). Are you up to it?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK



Growing Up

Growing up I went through so much b-s, that I ended up with no feelings. So I can't tell which parts of my life count as hitting rock bottom.

From almost overdosing damn near to death to hurt feelings and getting back stabbed by close ones; from losing loved ones before my eyes to living in a strangers' home and a concrete jungle; from watchin' a lot of so called friends leave to penitentiaries; from empty pockets to having more money than a rubber band or shoebox could hold; from losin' everything I own to not carin' about anything anymore, all I ask is that you pray for me.

-Tay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's clear that you have been through a lot, far more than most people your age. When so many bad things happen to us time and time again, we start to see our whole lives as "rock bottom." But you have to believe that one day things will get better, one day it won't be this hard. Now this might sound silly but no one who has been through anything, even things worse than you've had to deal with, made it through without hope. You have to find your way to faith, be it religious, spiritual or just personal.

Growing up I went through so much b-s, that I ended up with no feelings

This Dream

Don't wake me when I dream
'Cause life seems better within that dream
A fountain of gold, a world without pain
Does this dream seem insane?
The dream to live
The dream to fly
The dream to have a dream
That's why.
I say, don't wake me 'cause I'm
Dreaming.
Of a better life
One where there's no fights
And full of life.
I still have the dream some nights
But I wake up and say, it's not right
Just don't wake me, I'm dreaming.

-Joseph, Durango, Maricopa County Arizona

From The Beat: It's great to dream of a better life, 'cause we have to dream it before we can do it. We can only change what we see. It's not insane to think that we can be better and live better. Dream it, live it, do it!

Fake Friends

I feel so heart broken,
Like no one can describe.
My friends say they like me
But it's all just a lie.
They say I'm fun like no one can regret
But when I am gone they always throw a fit.
They point me out like I'm a mistake.
It's something that they call can fake.
It's like a cut on someone's knee,
It feels just like the pain inside of me.
The pain inside of me that you will never feel
Because the pain inside of me is something that will never heal.
So if you ever need a friend, I'm always here.
Just remember, I'm not like everyone else.
I won't just disappear.

-Iggy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another powerful poem packed full of honesty. One of the hardest things about writing sometimes is that we get so caught up making things sound a certain way, the meaning and importance of what you are saying can get pushed aside. But you have managed to maintain style without sacrificing what it is you are trying to say. Trust is huge – we spend our whole lives trying to figure out who we can and can't trust. Be smart about who you open up to but don't let being burned in the past keep you from opening up period.

You Already Know

What's good bra? It's been over one-hundred-and-seventy- plus-days since you were put to rest and I still can't get over it. You are in a better place I know this fo' sure. I still don't know why it had to be you. I know everybody has their time, but God damn!18 years yo' time was suppose to be way past that! We miss you bra.

You run through my mind everyday. Yo' really six feet (under) bra, why?! It wasn't meant... I wish I could have spent more time wit' you last year and this year. I just don't understand, and I want to so bad. It never ran through my mind that you would get killed out here.

Since 2004 death was getting closer and closer to me and bam it hit me right where it hurts. People like you wasn't suppose to die so soon, but like God says, if you live the wrong way your life will be cut short. But you weren't even doin' all that bad! Shhh, I mean, it's people out there killing raping and all this other shhh, and here you are living the hell out of life and before you knew it, it was taken away from you, why?

Not Cell, please tell me you got the wrong Cell, but when it comes to it it's you that's really gone, but I don't want to accept it until I meet you at the gate shaking yo' dreads.

You know like I know ninjas was hating you and it's some ninjas you didn't know most of them you know.

I still remember the time we was (hot) boxin' in my grandma's car and you told me what had went down, and two months later you got killed, why! And bra I don't know what to think anybody could have did it! Anybody! I miss you bra.

Like Chris said, yo' daughter's doing fine. I can't wait 'till she get older so I can just kick back and chop it up wit' her.

Damn bra why does it have to be like this? Why did it have to be you in the casket!? Not Cellie Bo. But it ain't shhh I can do now, but wait 'till I get out. I'ma meet you at the gate bra.

It seems since you been gone I been messing wit' the bras Dt I love them bras but you already know Tb and Sunny Dizol are the closest ones, them bras is my blood. Chris my ugly twin, I love the shhh out of that ninja just like you do bra. And ma bra Ty Dizol same as always,s I love you bra.

May God rest yo' soul and keep watchin' over us bra. Never forgetting and always loved. RIP Cell.

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It always hurts us to read tributes , particularly tributes such as this that speak of the love you have for Cell (RIP). We feel your pain each and every week. We feel your hunger to know what happened. We can only imagine what it is like to lose a friend, a close friend at eighteen. We do hope in Cell's honor and in respect to his family, you truly handle your business free of the system and any violence. We know Cell would be so honored to hear that you are going to high school then college, maintain a nice job, down the road raise a family and never ever set foot in the criminal justice system again. In the name of Cell make a change!

death was getting closer and closer to me and bam it hit me right where it hurts. People like you wasn't suppose to die so soon

My Lovely Days On The Beach

It was on January 30TH. Me and my one love decided that we would go to the lovely beach, and get the drama off our heads. Away from all the shhh and the crying kids.

We are on our way to San Francisco beach. I'm driving, he's sleeping on the passenger side. We get to the beach, I start unpacking the car and the blankets. He likes to go surfing.

I'm sitting in the sun relaxing he is in the water, swimming, surfing, whatever!

Then he called me to come in to the water. I'm like, "no, I don't want to." I just got my hair done."

He says, "let's just go for a walk down the beach."
I said "ok, I'm down for that"

So we are walking down the beach, talking and then I push him. We start play fighting, kissing- and then, I take off running.

He was like, "come here."
And I'm like, "no."
And then I go lay down on
The blanket, sitting there, getting a suntan.

Two hours go past. So we start playing football.

That was my lovely day on the beach with my one love, Pizzo

-Dominique, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That sounds like a fantastic day! Don't you wish you could have more like it? Guess what? You can. The less time you spend in jail, the more time you have to spend on the beach. Next time you're about to do something that will get you thrown back in here, ask yourself if you'd rather be at the beach next weekend!

My New Family

My new family I miss you very much
I just hope that you are holding up.
'Til that day I will be waking up.
With the biggest smile on my face
If there's any catching up that I have to do
I guess I will chase for first place
For your love that is
See I have been dreamin' about this day since I was a little kid
I got a family of my own just gotta find a way to live
Get a job to provide for my future wife and kid.
And try to keep a tight relationship between us
Because I think a break up would be hard for the both of us.
So I try not to think that way
And think about that upcoming day
It seems like forever in this place
Which makes me put my hand over my face
I only been here for a month and a couple of weeks
Feels like I have been locked up for years
Which brings so many tears
But I have to be strong
Because I know what I did was wrong
That's why I'm pissed off and very shamely
Because I can't spend time with my new family.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maurice aka Mos Def, to quote your namesake: "I ain't no perfect man, I'm trying to do the best that I can with what it is I have" Mos Def, he wrote his blues, and now you're writing yours. Another line in this song is "Shine your light on the world." Your words are part of the light you have to offer the world, your family is another. What else do you have to shine? Tell us!

The Life Of A Joker

A life of a joker.
When you bang your 'hood.
The 'hood is your family for life
--the family that you don't have—
the brothers, the sisters and the one that protects you and that you protect, too,
that's the family and the protection.
Why you gone, the game, I don't know,
but some people bang for to have a family
and there's people who bang because the fame and the power!
But for me, I bang because the family that I don't have and to feel loved for once in my life, not hated for being how you are!
That's is the life of a (gang member.)

-Gus, Marin

From The Beat: You deliver a powerful piece Gus. We are sure, sadly, too many young Beat writers can relate to your reasons as to finding a family on the streets. Now what? Can you see beyond this lifestyle? Beyond this so-called family? Because this family will never ever visit you in jail. This family will forget you as soon as you are long gone. Best to you and the road you are on.

My Hard Bottom

Rock bottom for me is getting put into the halls for a serious crime, when crime or the act of committing crimes isn't even a part of my life. My life was already going down a bad path, just by being on a blunt mission all day every day for the last few months. I never thought the sticky green could get me locked up, but it has. But at least I have a hard bottom to push off of to break my old mold and keep on fighting so that I can graduate and find better people to surround myself.

-Davin, Marin

From The Beat: What "hard bottom" do you have that sustains you when you've hit rock bottom, Davin? Now that you have no access to weed and your mind is clear, how are you doing? Can you deal with all the tension and problems of being in juvy? If so, does that encourage you to continue to work with whatever comes alone on the outs without being high or stoned? We hope so.

Le Tenía Miedo A Las Gangas

Le tenía miedo a la violencia de la calle, especialmente a las pandillas. Sobrepase esto porque yo me meti en una de ellas, lo cual es algo que no es bueno.

Mi vida cambio hasta ahora que estoy preso porque hasta ahora me di cuenta que eso es una gran locura. Cuando uno esta en gangas, te sientes único y el mejor de todos. Si yo pudiera volver a la niñez, me gustaría jugar soccer.

Solo porque ya seas mayor de edad no quiere decir que no puedes cambiar. Puedes cambiar, sólo inténtalo, deja las drogas, las pandillas, y todo lo que te trajo a la cárcel. Quisiera que esto fuera un consejo para todos esos que apenas empiezan. Gracias!

From The Beat: Haberte metido en una fue la opción menos indicada de todos. Todos les tenemos miedo a las pandillas pero eso no nos da el derecho de ser parte de ellos. ¿Crees que sirvio haberte metido en una de ellas? Solo mirate a cuantas cosas te diriguio, drogas, enemigos y cárcel. En la otra mano, estamos contento porque aunque cometistes un error, estas admitiendo que todo el mundo puede cambiar no importando la edad. ¿Ahora dinos sobre tus planes?

I Was Scared Of Gangs

I was scared of the violence in the streets, especially the gangs. I overcame this because I got involved in one of them, which is something that is not good.

My life changed up until now that I am locked up because up until now, I realized that being in a gang is something very crazy. When you are involved in gangs, you feel unique and the best out of everyone. If I could go back to my childhood, I would have liked to have played soccer.

Just because you are older, doesn't mean that you cannot change. You can change. Just try it. Leave behind the gangs, the drugs, and everything that brought you to jail. I would like for this to serve as words of advice for all those who are barely being introduced to these kinds of things. Thanks!

-Selin B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You got yourself involved in one was the worst options out of the ones you just brought up. We're all scared of gangs, but that doesn't give us the right to become part of them. Do you believe having gotten yourself involved in one did you any good? Just take a look at all the things that being in one has directed you to: Drugs, enemies, and jail. On the other hand, we're glad because even though you made a mistake, you are admitting that the whole world can change, regardless of your age. Now tell us about your plans?

Do Over

If I could have a do over in life, I wouldn't take it, because I believe everything in my life has happened for a reason. I believe everything that has happened to me has given me knowledge and experience for every new situation I have to face in my life.

For example, the time before this, I got locked up, I was at rock bottom, all messed up on drugs, and all my family shhh was all wrong, too. When I got locked up for over a year, I got to get my shhh together with my family and get healthy.

Now I know that drugs cannot take over my life, 'cause I have control. Also, I know my family situation could be good, 'cause it had been so I am grateful for that.

-Perry, Marin

From The Beat: You're already home now, Perry, and we hope you continue to see your situation clearly, take it slowly and take care to keep your freedom. You already know what can go wrong, especially when you're tempted with drugs, so please don't get discouraged and go back to them.

These Complicated Walls

My life got complicated when I came to these halls and I first hit these rooms. I started stressing; you just sit in this room and it be hella hot and you got to wait until somebody turns the key to let you out.

Another way I feel complicated is when I first hit probation. It got complicated because there was all this confusion about the tasks I had to do. I had to do hella stuff just to stay out of the halls. Eventually I got tired of it and said forget it. I messed up.

I started going bad on my PO and she locked me up for a good two months. I got out and started going back to what I was doing. So I was messing up and got locked up again for like two weeks. I got out on home supervision but was never in the house and always out doing all-nighters with my squad.

I got locked up again for a week and got out to go to a group home. But I said forget that, ran with my brahbrah. He had a thing on him, ended up robbing some people and got caught. Now I'm back in here until August. Hopefully my P.O. recommended E-M so I could try to do right this time, you feel me? Whatever I get, it don't matter. That's how I am in here in between these complicated walls.

-Lil' Dewey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The system can make life pretty complicated. Most people say once you are in, it feels like it is impossible to get out. Yet you have just thrown yourself into situations that you know will bring you right back into the halls time and time again. It doesn't sound like you made any sort of real effort to stay away so can you really feel as though the halls are making your life complicated? You are the one making your life complicated by continually making bad choices. Look we know it is frustrating feeling like stuck, like you have no say over the one thing you should have a say in (your life) but you have to prove to people that you can handle this responsibility. We hope you get another chance and we hope you take it seriously this time.

Do-Overs

If I could do "do overs," then I would be cheating my way through life. You could go back until you get everything just right. You could make sure that you knew the right lottery number, make sure that you would never get in trouble, and be on good terms with everyone. Then, when you're an old man, you go back and live your life again to see if you could do it again even more perfect. Of course this seems like the best thing or power a person could have--you would be so spoiled with the perfect life that it would be actually boring, an everyday thing to make things over again.

-Ryan, Marin

From The Beat: Well of course it would be cheating, we suppose, if we had the power to truly do things over, but then again, many of us get do-overs in our day to day life. You know for some they fail probation, get locked up, and then get released again on probation, that right there is a do over, another chance on probation.

A Man Admits When He's Wrong

My ways I picked up made a lot of things complicated. The choices I've made just put me in a position that I didn't realize or knew I had. It was me the way I was living. Some nights it was real complicated. I didn't eat a meal.

Then the way I got my money was complicated to others, but I was getting meals from it. It takes a person to be isolated form his own world to know that they was going wrong. But it's still complicated to me, that I was in the wrong. But after this experience it takes a man to realize he was in the wrong.

-Wood B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're right, it does help when you we take a step back from a situation to take a look at everything from the outside looking in. And you're also right that seeing where you went off track and acknowledging that you did is a sign of real maturity. So, with that maturity, where do you go from here?

The Beach

I like and don't like the beach. The reason I like the beach is because I love to see me just sittin' there lookin' at the girls that play in the water and chasin' each other. I also sit there lookin' at the bomb-ass moms that lay there.

But the most thing I like about the beach is looking at the water waves comin' and the sand and just like having the sound of the ocean, and also looking at the sun reflecting off the water. I also liked the smell of the stinky, sour, salty, infested, polluted, expired water. It also a fun place to be with family, friends, for barbeque and birthday parties and other fun stuff. I've been to a lot of beaches.

The reason I don't like the beach is because when I swim — now let me tell you, I'm a pretty good son-of –a-swimmer — but look, check this out. I can swim, but I'm like a rock. The reason I say rock is because I can swim but I can't float. I even almost drowned in the ocean 'cause I thought if you want to float, you have to hold your breath. I even hold my breath when only the water is up the my ankles. That's how scared I was of swimming in oceans. I was so scared that if I touch my toes I hold my breath as if I'm under water. But still I like it... even though I don't.

-Uce-b B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's good that you're able to enjoy some of the best parts of life that are for free. We always wonder why more people don't take advantage of things that are right there for them to enjoy. We especially like your description of the sound of the ocean. It always makes us calm. Does it have that effect on you?

Fear Of The Itsy Bitsy Spider

As a child I feared a big ol' spider, because one day I had got bit on my eye and it swelled up and I couldn't see for two days. So now when I see a spider, I back away or step on it wit' my shoe. Now that I'm in the hall, I had two big spiders and now I put my towel at the bottom of my door so they don't get in any more and I don't get bit again.

-Nando, Marin

From The Beat: Spider bites are terrible and scary. Shoot any kind of bite sucks! Whenever you get bitten, keep an eye on it, clean it good, maybe even go to the doctor right away, before the bite gets infected.

Cuando Yo Era Niño

Cuando yo era niño de 9 años mi major temor era que mi tía me cuidara porque ella me mal trataba y me golpiaba por nada. Yo recibi sus maltratos hasta la edad de 12 años de edad. Yo logre superar sus maltratos iyendome a la casa. Fue de esa manera cuando me vine desde Honduras a este pais.

Aqui encontre gente que me mostro cariño y consuelo porque me sentía solo. Así fue que logre superar mi problema.

Aqui en esta ciudad no me he portado bien. He andado en cosas malas. Por eso me quieren deportar y no quiero que me deporten porque no sé que vaya a pasar conmigo cuando regrese a Honduras. Esta es mi version.

From The Beat: Esperamos que las cosas te salgan mejor. Lastimosamente el abuso en niño pasan hasta en los paises más ricos o pobres. ¿Si sabías lo duro que fue tu vida allá porque hicistes lo que hicistes? ¿Por que buscar más cuando ya tenías el cariño que deseabas tener? Esperamos que esta vez tu tía comprenda que ya eres mayor y que las cosas las puedes entender sin tener que golpiarte.

When I Was A Little Boy

When I was a little boy and I was nine years old, my biggest fear was my auntie taking care of me because she mistreated me and she would hit me over nothing. I received her mistreatment until I reached the age of 12. I was able to overcome her mistreatment by fleeing from the house. This is when I left Honduras to come to this country.

Over here, I met people that showed me affection and counsel because I felt alone. That's how I was able to overcome my problem.

Over here in this city, I have not behaved myself. I have been involved in bad things. That's why they want to deport me and I don't want them to deport me because I don't know what is going to happen to me when I return to Honduras. This is my version.

-Carlos B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope that things come out for the best for you. Unfortunately, child abuse occurs in all countries, whether rich or poor. If you already knew how hard life was like for you over there, why did you do the kind of things that you did? Why search for more when you already had the affection that you longed to have? We hope that this time your auntie comprehends that you are older and you can understand things without the need of being hit to grasp the concept.

My Life

Today as I look back at my life I think of all the stupid shhh I did. All the drugs and all the people I hurt when I was doing all this crazy stuff. It was like I don't care. When I think back to when I was staying in the 'hood, all I did was bust guns, sell dope, smoke weed and pop pills, and look where that shhh got me, locked up looking dumb and looking at the same fake people.

-Lil' AJ B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We took out the last line, AJ, 'cause there's no need for you to focus on anyone else but yourself. And it's clear to us that you are focusing on yourself, and that you're seeing things very clearly for the first time. Some people never open their eyes, so congratulations!

We Supposed To Be Brothers

I'm stuck in a cell
because I wouldn't tell.
Stressin' so much, tryin' to learn my lesson.
Looking for God's blessing to take me out.
Just want to make me shout.
I'm trying to start new,
Man I hate this county food.
But they tryin' to get me with burglary and home invasion.
And now I'm praying to let me free
and leave me be.
Man I'm mad
but I'm also sad.
I miss my people so much,
about to make me go nuts.
Why did I go into that hut
and now I'm in here stuck.
But I seen people get killed
like damn I shouldn't steal
ninjas killin' each other,
but I thought we suppose to be brothers,
but when I get out I would be forever respected.
On da real.

-Lil' Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem masterfully lays out all the stresses of your situation, and it also leaves us with a lot of questions – like what will having that 'respect' do for you? You've seen some of the worst the streets had to offer, and so we're hoping you want to get out of the streets after being witness to what they can do. How do you plan on doing that?

Motivation

These four walls breakin' me down
But I always pick myself up
How? Motivation
My family tellin' me they miss me at home
That's motivation
It tells me I'm needed somewhere
I get messages through people from friends
All tellin' me "keep yo' head up"
That's motivation

-Franklin B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Motivation is a powerful force, Franklin, and it is good to know that you are being motivated by family and friends — and the desire to get free and stay free. But we hope your motivation takes you beyond just the desire to get out and into the realm of thinking and planning just how to achieve that goal, and make it permanent!

Make A Change For The Better

People that say they are yo' ninjas really are not. They laugh with you and be talking about you when you are not around, but they call you bra all day long. To me that is weak. If you say someone is yo' ninja, then ride with your ninja. Do not say that ninja to get something out of him and then when he break his back to give it to you because you said that he was yo' ninja then the next day he acts like he does not know you.

I got something to ask. If you had one chance to change your life, how would you go about doing' it? Or is that you do not want to change? Do you just feel that you have to act hard all the time just to fit in with a crew because you do not want to be by yourself? Make a change for the betta not for the worse.

-Fat-Rat B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You end this piece with excellent advice, Fat-Rat. So tell us, what are the changes for the better that you are planning to make in your own life?

Lo Que Me Gustaría Hacer Y Porque

Cuando yo cai preso fue antes de Navidad. Estuve preso por seis meses. En el tiempo que estuve preso pensaba en mi famila. También pensaba en mi familia y en como cambiar mi vida. Yo ya no quería estar preso no hacer sufrir a mi mama No solo a mi mama sino a toda mi familia que siente amor y cariño por mí.

Antes de que yo fuera a caer preso yo llamaba a mi familia. Le decía que no se preocuparan por mí. Yo siempre les decía que estaba bien.

Cuando yo llebaba unos meses en la Juvenile, me puse a pensar en ya no hacer sufrir más a mi familia. Me mandaron a un grupo. Me sentía feliz. Yo decía que iba a cambiar para mi familia y no hacerla sufrir.

Cuando estuve en el grupo iba a jugar con mis amigos pelota. Pensaba en mi familia. Quería trabajar y mandarles dinero. También dije que yo tenía que cambiar para poder sacar mi vida adelante.

Un día llame a mis amigos y me dijeron que querían verme y les dije que no se preocupara que iba para allá. Y volvi a caer preso. Ahora aqui estoy como un tonto por haberme ido del grupo. Quiero cambiar mi vida para nunca volver a la cárcel y nunca hacer sufrir a mi familia.

From The Beat: Tienes una familia lejos de ti que depende de ti de alguna manera o de otra. Al estar preso no los estas ayudando, estas perdiendo tu tiempo, y haciendo sufrir aquellos quienes te quieren. Ellos y tu se merecen mejor vida. Y para lograr esto necesita dejar toda aquellas cosas que te puedan volver a meter a este lugar. Llebate esto de experiencia si es que te dan otra oportunidad aqui o te mandan a tu pais de origen. Acuerdate que allá las cosas son muy duras.

What I Would Like To Do And Why

When I got locked up, it was before Christmas. I was locked up for six months. During the time that I was locked up, I would think about my family. Besides thinking about my family, I would think about how I could change my life. I no longer wanted to be locked up or continue to make my mother suffer. Not just my mother, but rather my entire family who has love and affection for me.

Before I ended up getting locked up, I would call my family. I would tell them not to worry about me. I would always tell them that I was doing well.

When I had already been in Juvenile for a couple months, I started to think about no longer making my family suffer. They sent me to a Group Home. I felt happy. I said I would change for my family and not make them suffer.

When I was in the Group Home, I would go out and play ball with my friends. I would think about my family. I wanted to work and send them money. I also said that I had to change so I could be able to take my life forward.

One day, I called my friends and they told me that they wanted to see me and I told them not to worry and that I was going to make my way over there, and I ended up getting locked up again. Now I am in here like an idiot for having run from my Group Home. I want to change my life so I never have to come back to jail and never make my family suffer again.

-Elvin B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You have a family that's far away from you and one that depends on you in one form or another. By being locked up, you are not helping them out, you're wasting your time, and making those who love you suffer. They and you deserve a better life and in order to accomplish this, you have to leave behind all those things that can bring you back to this place. Take this whole experience as a learning experience regardless if they give you another opportunity or they send you back to your country of origin. Remember that things over there are much more difficult.

I Got 'Em Frettin'

I got 'em frettin'
Regrettin'
Just the way I spread it
Pick up the mornin' paper
They read it
My name edit
I thought they knew
Keep it real
From day one
Takin' the pressure
The cops beat us
Can't rebel back
No other way to relax
Nobody know why we cry
Nobody cry when we die
Lord, send my soul to the sky
One day we all be in paradise
Kickin' it on the spot
Ain't no one hurt
Ain't nobody gonna get killed

-Dean, Marin

From The Beat: What inspired this piece? Is it just off the top of the head, or are you spitting' words from what you have seen and been apart of?

Fear For My Lil' Brother

What I fear the most and what hurts me the most is when I think of my lil' brother, you feel me? 'Cause when I was home, I was the only one who he really looked up to and always wanted to be like me and be wit' me all the time. But now I ain't home and I ain't there to take care of him and tell him to do the right thing and not to get into the gang life and shhh like that. And now that I ain't there I'm really scared that he might get into a lot of shhh and end up in the same position as me, that's what I hella fear, and all I want to let you know, lil' bro, is that I love you wit' all my heart and hope I'll be home soon to be wit' you, carnal. Love you, Pelon, lil' one.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: Are you in the gang life? If so, would you be willing to get out of it for your own sake as well as for your little brother? It's confusing for young kids to listen to and follow their older brothers when those brothers give them advice they themselves don't follow. What can you do now to steer him into living an independent life? Call him? Write him? You have a good heart. Rise up!

Complicated

The one time in my life
When it really got hard, complicated
And confusing is when Marcellus got
Killed 2-6-06 the last words you
Said was "I'm hit."
I wish I could
Have been wit' you
but I was at Camp
love and miss you forever.
RIP Cell

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When something good or bad happens to our family/close friends it is so natural to have wanted to be there to share in the moment good or bad. What do you think would have happened if you were not at camp? Let this be a painful lesson, that being incarcerated you lose out on plenty. Sure maybe you could have saved his life. Sure maybe you could have steered things in a different direction, or it could have been a lot worse. Cell's death has to be the driving force for you to live a better safer life!

Now I Know

This week my life got complicated because I was going out and drinking more than ever. I had already been on probation for six months and I completed it and my case was dismissed.

Here I am again, with two new charges not knowing what's going to happen. This happened because my eyes have still been closed. They opened a bit the first time, but I guess it wasn't enough. Now my eyes are open. Now I see what I have to do. Now I know what will keep me away from here.

No one is to blame but me. I made my own actions and now I am paying for them. No one is to blame but me and my childish mentality. The only thing that can be done to make things less complicated is to let me out of here and take care of my business and get my life back on track.

My life before was anything but complicated. I went to school, wasn't the best student, kicked it with friends and homies from the block even though I'm not from anywhere. Got girls, girls. That's the one thing I miss. That's the best thing out there for me right now, my girl. Now my simple life has turned complicated from a fight that I barely even recall now from being in here.

-Oliver B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We wish you had shared some of the new knowledge you say you've acquired since coming here the second time. What is it that you see you have to do, and how are you going to do it? We hope you read and reread the very first line of what you wrote, because we can't emphasize enough how deadly drinking can be — for everyone, but especially for one who drinks to the extent of not remembering things... People think that alcohol is not so bad because "everybody" does it, and it's pushed on us right and left. But we have seen how it can totally devastate lives like yours, and the worst part is, it accomplishes this devastation little by little so that you can keep telling yourself it hasn't happened to you until it does. And then it's too late. So we hope one of the things that your open eyes now see is that there is no problem in the world that alcohol can't make worse...

This happened because my eyes have still been closed. They opened a bit the first time, but I guess it wasn't enough.

Do Overs

Wit' my ride or die ninja, caught up for burglary
Didn't think in my mind I'd have to commit perjury
My ninja got away, I got wrapped. Damn!
Forgot this was my last chance
He was in the car, I was the look out
Went to court feelin' like I just struck out
Four years of YA over my head
Forget that choice, I'd rather become dead
Didn't even do the crime, so why must I do the time
I wish I could go back and ask for a "Do over"
But that just like going to my room and finding a four-leaf clover
Ain't no point to try, so I just wait in my room for the time to go by
Yeah, it's weak, but I ain't going to let it be my defeat
When I'm out I'ma still be on my grind
Doing my shhh the right way, always getting' mine.
I just wish my ninja could've seen the circumstances
Knowing it would have been his first offence, knowing that this was my last chance
I wish I could be back and ask for a "Do over"
But that's just like going to my room and finding a four leaf clover

-Cesar B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a standout for the skill you bring as a writer — but not necessarily the wisdom you demonstrate as a thinker. Being a look-out during the course of a crime is, itself, a crime, so you can't claim to be innocent. But that doesn't really matter. The bottom line is this: You're in there now, so you have to learn how you're going to manage it. We hope the experience is enough to change that "I'm gonna do it my way, but slicker" attitude you bring to this piece, because we can't count the number of people we know who had exactly the same attitude, and are now doing years of their lives as slaves to this system! You're right that wishing for a do-over is not going to bring it, but wishing that your homie had seen the outcome is even more useless because it's you who should have seen the potential for blowing your last chance. That was your responsibility, and nobody else's. We hope it's not like asking for our own four-leaf clover to wish that you would find a way not to give your life over to strangers, because you have the power to grant that wish. Whether you do or not is up to you...

Life Without You

It's kinda hard to smile without being able to see yo' face
Which drives me crazy damn near every day
I try to pray to make the pain go away
But it's hard all I can picture is your pretty smile
That drives me wild
Looking at the stars at night
Just wondering what you are doing
If you still that person that I fell in love with
Because me without you is very painful it feels like shhh
But when I get out maybe we can start where we left off.
I hope you understand what I'm saying to you
That I want to spend the rest of my life with you
The mother of our child which is very beautiful
And I'm glad to be her father
But me in here is not right
That's why I pray to God every night
To give me another chance to show that I will do right by him
And try my best to live right and not wrong
Baby I'm writing this poem and trying to stay strong
'Till the day they let me come home
I try not to cry so I just close my eyes
And think about the good time instead of the bad
So until then when I see you and my very beautiful daughter I will be glad to
And that's when I can live life with you.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem, and your love for your girl and your daughter shines in each line. Tell us more about how you met, how you get along, what works, what doesn't, and what kind of life you want to build together when you get out. Becoming a father when you're still so young takes extra determination and work, we hope you do it!

Marks + Scars = Answers

Breathe in,
Breathe out.
You need to take small steps
Before you try to figure me out.
I should shout out loud
But y'all ain't hearing it.
I give y'all some game
But y'all ain't feeling it.
So drop your guard
And take this bowl of perfect
As I make some words
And you try to interpret.
You see I fell into a stream
That's overflowing with my own conclusions.
But I got scars on my mind –
They represent my accomplishments.
I tried to take over the world
(I'm half way there)
But I still feel helpless.
I caught all the pearls
And now I feel selfish.
I'm going to feed them
Bet them
Then let them go free
And see if I can get them to need me.

-Yogi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a fantastic piece. While there is some anger underneath the surface, the piece doesn't come off as angry. It comes off as a mix of triumphant and thoughtful. You have been through a lot and seen even more so we hope you use your past to be a better man, instead of a bitter man. It's easy to get lost in your own head. It's easy to think you know it all when you have been to hell and back. But you don't. Give yourself time and keep your eyes and heart open.

I hope you understand
what I'm saying to you
That I want to spend the rest
of my life with you

Never

The love I have for you
Is a shadow on the wall that will never disappear.
It's like a puppy
That will never have a fear.
I love like you will never know.
I guess I'm just scared to let my feelings show.
I never got to tell you how you mean to me.
I guess it's something you never got to see.
I'll never forget you.
I'll always let you know
Just how much I love you.

-Iggy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a great sentence to start off a piece – talk about a strong analogy – it's both haunting and beautiful. This entire piece is heart felt and well-written. Poetry is one of the best ways to write about love but certainly not the only one. You have a unique style and we would like to see it used in different ways. Next time try telling us a story.

Complicated

My life ain't complicated, because I really don't care. I don't care what people say or do to me. I love my life so much. When people talk about me, it makes me feel like a superstar. I didn't happen because it's not complicated. Because I don't think it's complicated. But people think life is complicated. Life is not complicated.

There ain't nobody to blame, because it's your life. If you going to blame yourself, because it your choice you lead your life and why you going to blame nobody.

How to make my life less complicated. First my life ain't complicated. Because I love my life. My life ain't complicated at all. I don't know how to make my life less complicated.

-Sequoia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We think life is often very complicated, which can be difficult. We understand the desire for the simple life, after all everyone dreams about that sometimes. Who wouldn't like to just live on the beach somewhere, always have enough money, a family who loves and supports you, etc. But the reality is most people have to work pretty hard to ever get to the point where they can even say that one part of their life is simple. If you could make one part of your life simple, what would it be? Family, money, education, job?

Be Yourself

For all y'all youth, be positive and just be yourself. If you can't lead then keep going forward. Don't live your life by how others think. Stay in school and get it over with because I know I will. Time is never promised. "You can't turn a butterfly back into a caterpillar." I lost control of my life by ending up here. Don't you miss the outs? What is life to you? Maybe it's confusing but life to me is love. I love to be loved by the one who loves to give love.

-M-Roy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is some excellent advice. It's easy to be a follower, it's easy to not care and do what you want. But easy does not always mean better. You made some mistakes but are learning and growing from them and for that you should be very proud of yourself. Keep standing tall and looking to the sky cause you are on your way.

My Number One Priority

My life got more complicated when I started to place material things before everything like school, family and girls. I don't think my life will ever get any easier because I'm getting older and have more responsibility. Money will still be number one when I get out because I'm addicted and I don't want to change. I don't think it matters when my life got complicated, what matters is that it is. And there is nothing there to help me through.

-Zeke, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We feel that last line. You are right in a way – life is what it is now so who cares how or when things happened. But have you ever heard the saying, "You can't know where you are going unless you know where you have been?" Sounds a little corny but it's true. Knowing why you do the things you do can help you repeat the good habits you have and avoid making the same mistakes. It sounds like you have your mind made up about what's important to you and how you want to go about getting it. But just remember you can't spend money in jail or from a coffin. Making money can be what you care about but there is a better way.

What I Know

This all I know:
I'm in this jail
Without bail
No coke to sell and
Nothing but jokes to tell
Jokes, jokes
Can't laugh with my folks.
Can't do what I want.
Got to do what they tell.
Most of the time they yell.
But sooner or later I'll be out of hell.
Doing well, or trying to do well.
But you never know
Only time will tell.

-Lil' Chad, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a solid poem – it's real. And we agree – words mean a lot but time will only tell if they come true. You have to do everything in your power to make them come true though. The halls are never fun but that's the point. Listen, learn and make this your last time here.

Growing

Growing up in the Bay where ninjas like to swing it, where ninjas all around - got dreads and shake the feds. They post on the block all night. See me, I'm different 'cause I want a job. I'm tryin' to support my baby and my family. I ain't trying to get shot. I know hella people getting shot now days.

When you locked up, you can't see all the stuff you want to see. I came in the hall over some bs. I don't really want to talk about it.

See I got a car known as a scrapper Buick. I been tryin to get my car fixed. I want it to be a two-tone blue and yellow. Then get my 20's or 22's. After that I'm going to sell it and then get my dream car – a 2002 Camero SS.

-Gb, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We like that you think you are putting your child's needs first. As a parent, your number he or she should be your top priority. And being good a parent means being good to them and to yourself. You can't be much of a father from inside the halls. And too many young people are losing their lives to the street. It's nice to see that it has influenced you to go the other way. It sounds like you are ready to work hard and we hope you finally get that car, but not at the expense of your child!

Dream

I was having a dream, and in my dream I kept falling down the same hole, which meant –

Juvenile Hall, and I didn't want that. I was smoking a lot more crimes, but this time I was thinking about that hole, and I didn't smoke more crimes. And this time I went around the hole, and not the same way.

-F, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Did you know that psychologists believe that we can solve problems in our sleep. There's an old expression that goes: let me sleep on it. And it turns out that this is good advice. So, follow your dream's advice. Stop doing the crimes and you can avoid the hole. Also, notice how much the word 'hole' sounds like the word 'hall'. Thanks for sharing your very cool dream with us.

My Time Is Coming

Saludos Beat. First off, let me start this off with love and respect to all. Well as far as I am concerned, I'm doing coo', just chillin' like a villain. This be that vato Looney.

Well I think life is complicated because you don't know what's going happen to you next. It's like life is hard but then it's not. Now I got to do what other people tell me to because I'm in juvenile hall. I can't be mad. I just got to do my time and get out.

I think I'm going to a group home in Fremont. If not I'm going to ROP in San Andreas but where ever they send me I'm going do what I got to do to get out and stay out for good to be with my familia at home.

So to everybody who's doing time, you'll get out. Just keep it solid and keep up the good work. 'Till next time pencil meets paper.

-Looney, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Looney you sound so determined and so ready to get out there, we can't wait for you to get your second chance. Now we realize that a lot of young men and women leave the halls serious about making some changes in their life but the harsh realities of not finding jobs, being behind in school and so on can almost suck the hope right of you. Be strong and don't give up. It will be hard but you can do this, and the fact that you are fighting to stay with the people you love will make this fight a little easier. Lean on them for support and comfort. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Messed Up

I know I messed up
But I have to pick my head up
It's hard just thinking about what I did.
Man I wish I was a little kid
Just so I could get a little time instead of a lot
Damn this place, don't you know it's hot.
They need to transfer me to another spot.
I messed up and that's been on my mind.
But they say if you do the crime you gotta do the time.
Instead of me on the outs getting' my shine on
I'm in this place gettin' my workout on.
This place is very dirty, not even close to being clean.
You feel me though if you know what I mean.
And you're not in mine
But it's going to be alright don't even tip
Just give me a little time so don't bit on your lip
Or just stand there with your hands on yo' hip.
They only gave me six months, better than five years
So don't even think about shedding those tears.
I'll be home shortly when I get there be ready.
Focus on me, what I'm about to ask you so be steady,
so don't start asking questions
And stop looking around guessin'
Because if you know the answer to my pop quiz question:
Will you be my wife?
Please say yes
So I can wipe all of this sweat off my face
and so I can stop the stress
Me without you, it's hard can't you see?
Baby girl, you're the one for me.

-Maurice, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Maurice, we can see all the stress, AND all the hope, working their way across this poem. From the streets to the feeling of The Hall, to the new family you're trying to create. Once you get out, what will you do to take care of your loved ones and yourself?

Complications In My Life

My life hella complicated
My life... I'm beginning to hate it
Where did it all go wrong?
I've been on probation for too long!
I need to be coo' and get my life together
Instead of runnin' these streets,
And doing whatever
Messing wit' the wrong people that get caught up
And when asked about something
My name get brought up
Then I get locked up!
I really needa learn how ta think twice
And fix all the complications in my life

-April GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Don't try to fix ALL the complications in your life. Focus on one or two things. For example, what brought you here? If you think about that for a minute, you might also think about what you have to stop doing in order not to come here, which would remove a major complication in your life. Think about school and what you need to do to finish, because without a foundation of school, there can only be more complications for you down the road. You have the power to turn your negative feelings about your life into positive ones, but you have to take control of your own life, and stop following others, because they don't have your best interests at heart. What would you like to do in your life? What would you like to accomplish? Think about those things, and make a real plan (with steps: one, two, three...) for how to get there. You'll be amazed at how many complications fall away when you have goals you're working towards.

Complicated Life

I have a complicated life
Or I have no freedom
No way to see family members
That I want to see
Can't do what I want to
Can't even kick it with my crew
My life is so complicated
And no one understands
I have to watch out for' hatas
That's all I'm sayin'
I live a complicated life
'Cause I watch my back on the streets at night
I just need a chance to live
Also a chance to give
I need to start over and live
My life is hard
My heart is scared
'Cause my family is too far away from home
Tomorrow
I'll still be gone
The next day
I won't be home
So now I cry
'Cause I have a complicated life.

-Ally Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Another great poem, and complicated indeed... answer us this: we know how much your daughter means to you, how much your hopes for the future keep you from giving up in here, but you're also really missing the street life... will you be able to "kick it with your crew" without getting sucked back into all the hell that separated you from your family this last time?

It's What You Make Of It

My life has been complicated because of my wants in life. I think life is for the most part as complicated as you want it to be. Like me for example, I wanted to be a part of a brotherhood, which involved me making certain decisions to do things and act a certain way. This caused society to look at me differently and it complicated my life.

Someone could still have very little wants in life and not care about being rich or accepted by the public. That would make life less complicated I but I guess there are still necessities that complicate life such as following the rules of the government, housing yourself, etc.

-Dwayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well-thought out piece Dwayne. We like that you took some time to really think about what you were going to say. And we agree on some levels that life is as complicated as you make it. We also believe that some of us are born into and grow up in circumstances that make life more challenging and more of a struggle that leave little choice about how complicated life is. Again you remind us though that life is ultimately about choices. You made some poor choices, are paying the price for them and will no doubt not repeat them.

Long Time

Hey, this is Uriel, if you don't know me. And if you think you know me, you don't. Well, I am just here, just doing time. And I don't have one idea when I am coming out. Well, I know that I am not coming out for a good long time. And when I say a good long time, I mean it. Not like the ones who come in for a probation violation and say they are going to be here for a long time. Stupid.

-Uriel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: When you have hard time facing you, the last thing you want to hear is a bunch of bull about how everything will be all right. But we do know some very good things about you. We know you have taught yourself to read and write in the last two years. And we know that anyone who can do that has both persistence and a strong desire to make something of himself. And that can't be taken away from you. Develop those qualities and you can use them in any situation. Remember the story of Malcolm X. He memorized the dictionary. When he came out of the can, he 'owned' just about every word in the English language. Here is what the great poet Antonio Porchia said about words: This world understands nothing but words, and you have come into it with almost none. Take your desire to learn and start with the dictionary. And while you are learning every word in it, be reading all the good books you can get your hands on.

Young, Dumb and In Love

I thought I was in love, being with my chula for two years.
I thought she was the one.
She'd tell me she loved me and we'd be together forever.
I got her name clear across my chest.
Homies told me I was a fool.
I told them: homies – I'm in love.
She's the one.
But I was wrong.
I did everything for this one.
I ditched my homies for this one.
And for what? Just so she could break my heart.
Tears and tears I cried.
But that's what I get for being young, dumb and in love.

-Alexis, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Hey, it doesn't always work out that way. But the fact is, most of us have to navigate through treacherous waters at one time or another. And the ocean of love is unpredictable. Learn to float. Learn to swim. But try to stay in the boat.

When You Left

Man this yo boy Lil' Tuttie from San Francisco, and for all y'all who know my big brah Ray Diddy from the City, I know y'all miss him, but not like me because he was a big part of my life. He was always around me talking about let's play football when I was going to Everett (Middle School).

At one of our games he was the ref, he told me to do this one play and I did it and we won the game and he was hella happy for me and he told me I was his young homey and to do good and stay in school and stay out of shhh and to this day I say RIP Ray Diddy, I love you bra..

-Lil Tuttie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You share a fond memory of Ray Diddy (RIP), which we appreciate reading, now we hope you can stay clear of trouble in his name from this point forward.

My Power Outage

When I felt like I didn't have enough power to control my feelings
or thoughts is when ma bra died
at the time I didn't know what to do
didn't know how to react
so many things had run through my mind
one of them was to run from camp and that one I did
at this point and time I still can't get over it
day in and day out he runs through my mind
I miss him so much I wish I can go back in time but I can't.]
But what I can do is ask and pray that he is in rest
and ask God to stop all this violence in Oakland
cause it sure in hell ain't fun
I love you ninjas and please stay safe.
RIP Cell

-Lil' Naudie Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are curious have you spoken to anyone in the system about Cell's death? Has anyone helped you mourn his loss? If not this too is a tragedy that the juvenile justice system is not set up to help young people understand death and learn how to mourn the loss of close friends and family. If anyone in the system cared about their youth they would have been reading your pieces in The Beat Within every week, and feeling your pain, and maybe they would have even contacted us at The Beat to see how to reach you. Seriously.

Facin' Too Many Felonies

A point in my life that I would consider rock bottom is the situation I'm facing right now, because they offerin' me years for a deal and life if I get found guilty. I got these felony charges and I'm being tried as an adult.

I also look at this situation I'm in as a reality check because my life is in the hands of a jury I never even met, and it comes down to they words (guilty or not guilty) and that right there determines my downfall. I never thought I would be here facing charges like this.

Well, I have advice to all people who still got chances...you can have all the fun you want, but please do not get involved with no foolish shhh.

-Young Bud, Marin

From The Beat: Even when you're facing large time, you're generous with those who read this to advise them to stay strong and out of trouble. First, talk to your attorney, establish as good of a relationship as possible. Ask him/her as many questions as possible. You want to understand what is truly going on with your case, and why your attorney is doing what he/she thinks is best. Sadly, this is a time where you have to get focused and stay serious, too much is at stake.

Just Watching

One day when I was with my cousins, Ricky and Gerald and one of my cousin's friend, Jacob. They all went up to a white boy on a skateboard and told him to come out the pockets.

The boy said, "I don't have anything".

And Gerald said, "Brah, you better".

And he said, "I don't have anything,"

So Jacob patted his pocket and the boy said, "Don't touch me," and tried to hit Gerald.

So Ricky in defense, socked the boy in the face twice. Then, the boy fell to the ground through the bushes and got up and said, "Don't touch me!"

Gerald then picked him up and laid him down on the ground and stomped his face, while Jacob stomped on his body, and Ricky dug through his pockets. I sat there and watched as the boy was screaming, "Ouch!" I told them to stop hitting him, but because I'm the youngest, they didn't listen.

-Dominique, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Dominique, nice story telling, but take some resposibility for that day. You were there. You are just as guilty. Ricky waqsn't acting in defense by hitting him – they had no business going through his pockets in the first place. You need to think about the people you are hanging around. As you sit in the Hall tonight, think about this lifestyle, can you get used to it? Cause if you don't make any changes in your lifestyle, or the company you keep, you may end up wearing someone else's underwear for a long time.

Love

I pray to the Lord
Who lives above
To send me a lady
Someone to love
She's got to be fine
Of the beautiful sort,
And Lord, if you can
She's got to be short
She's got to have class
And a sweet sort of grace
And she's got to light up
When she sees my face
She'd care about others
With a little bit of style
And she'd go to her, church
Every once in a while
I know you're real busy
So I'm not asking much
Just a sweet little lady
That warms to my touch

-G-Money, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sweet piece. You've been down for a minute G, and we can only imagine how lonely it is, to not be loved. We know in time you will get your chance to live freely, find good friends who respect and love you and hopefully in time you will fall in love with a caring person, as you move further and further away from the system.

What Is A Friend

Is a friend someone who does nothing when
you're getting jumped?
Is a friend someone who sleeps with your girl
behind you back?
Is a friend someone who leaves you in your time
of need?
Is a friend someone who will do anything to get
out of problems
you both have caused?
No, I tell you what a friend is...
A friend is someone who is there through thick
and thin
someone who is willing to die for you in the end.
But to tell you the truth nobody is a friend.

-Boo Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You tell us a charming guy life you doesn't have a friend? Why do you think you feel this way? Is it because you were hurt by an ol' friend? We'll tell you this, a friend will never lead another friend into danger. We hope you find some good friends in the next chapter of your life, and that life has nothing to do with juvenile/jail.

Still A Possibility

I hear such vulgarities come out of my mouth
when I only see my mother four times a month.
Yet inside, I feel the possibility of success
and grandiose visions.
On the 'ins' you have a pattern so routinely
precise
you have no need for a clock.
Sometimes my skin crawls like ants
because I fiend for a rig.
And sometimes I write to my ex,
but I'm just another boy in her diary.
I hate following directions.

-Michael, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: You write well. If you want to be more than 'just another boy', start by getting a handle on your addiction. You're keeping bad company. It leaves no room for anyone else.

The Streets

Man these streets ain't coo'
People dropping like sweat during a heat wave
My lil' B-G Emmit died,
'cause he was out doin' something he wasn't suppose to do
Not that I'm blamin' him, but he is an example of wrong
place at the wrong time
Terrell got popped for stealing T-shirts
That goes to show you the people really don't care
People are willing to kill you over the littlest shhh
My lil' brother is in the streets with the fast life
He only a young teen
Sometimes I think he's one of Oakland next victims
And it hurts me to wonder if he is still alive
I'm in jail this year
I'm not a good role model
But I know right from wrong
To be honest
You don't ever have to be in the wrong to die
That's why I pray every night
And ask God to watch over us throughout our day
And every step we take
We never know what will happen next
And we never know when it's our time to go
For those who believe, pray
Because God is your only way to peace and eternal life
It's a life for a life
God judges you and he opens the doors
That's what saved my life
I was in the streets
And now I know that the streets ain't coo.

-Makayla, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Makayla, tell us, what was it that made you finally decide that his was the time to change? Once you walk out of the doors of this Hall, how will you live your life away from the streets?

I Don't Wanna Suffer In The Ghetto

I don't wanna suffer in the ghetto....
From these ghetto blues
Havin' to hustle, bustin' pistols fo' ninjas
To get new shoes
My mind is in a daze
Them boys stay bustin' trays
Been doin' this since age eleven
But the block ain't close to Heaven
See you Jay when I get there
Them ninjas gon' pay
I swear.....
Bra, don't grab ya' pistol
And cock it
All this violence
We gotta stop it
Lil' soldiers dyin'
Mama's cryin' forever
He off the block, kid
You think you're livin' wealthy,
But God got you on a clock
So watch yo' fake limp
The devil's yo' real pimp
Up on them rocks
These monsta's bustin' fo-fo's
Closet filled up with bo's
Take careful of ya' time
Life ain't all about them O's
That street life
Ain't nothin' bullets hit
Ya mind is dozed

-Young S, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You got a nice flow – and you get pretty deep on some lines. But are you talking about coping with this violent life or are you feeling fed up. Your content is cliché street stories. Is this how you really feel? You are too young to feel like street life is your fate. You have the opportunity to make changes if you want to. Young Savage, YOU don't grab your pistol! Think about YOUR decisions, take your own advice. It doesn't have to rhyme to be a good idea. Be smart – hear your words. Peace.

My life got so out of control when I started getting involved with drugs

So Out of Control

My life got so out of control when I started getting involved with drugs — because I got locked up and it drove me crazy, doing things I regret. People don't mess with me no more because they think I can't be trusted.

And when I got involved selling drugs, I used to be outside all day and night, having my mom worry when she heard a police or an ambulance noise — and gunshots. She used to be up all night until I came in the house because she was worried about me.

But I'm changing, slowly because it doesn't happen overnight. And I try and I try not to get caught up in the same stuff, but it's hard. Slowly but surely, I'm changing for the good.

-Laroo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We believe you when you say it's hard. We've seen so many quit even trying to change because they know not a single person from their block or 'hood who has successfully gotten out of the life. And yes, it will take time to build a new set of behaviors and especially way of thinking, even seeing, and reacting. Also you will need to draw some lines, hard and fast — drugs, for example. Change that one thing, stick to it, and everything else will begin to change, too. We know addicts who when they're home with their family, have to clap their hands the whole time another family member leaves the room, because they have so thoroughly destroyed trust. Yet, if you accept how others feel as a natural response to what you've done, and you continue to change and stay on course, day by day, trust returns. First you need to prove it to yourself, so you can begin to trust yourself. We believe you can do it, that you've already begun.

The Streets I from

The streets I from is hella grimy.
The streets I from you can't get caught slipping if you do get caught it's over.
The streets I from you got to be ducking and dodging if nobody knows you.
The streets I from has no suckas in it.
The streets I from have no bullet proof vests in it.
The streets I from people go stupid and nuts.
The streets I from my ninjas ride and die.
The streets I from ninjas don't care where you from.
The streets I from police all over us.
The streets I from represent the shady straight up.
The streets I from it's slimy but I don't care.
I come from Oakland where the youngster's hella grimy!!

-Lil' Dewey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So we like the rhythm this piece establishes. Repetition is a great device to get your words into the words head and can make your poetry come to life. Sometimes we can't tell if our young writers are just telling like it is about where they are from or if they are bragging and proud to be from a neighborhood full of so much chaos. Now you can't choose where you are born but you sure can choose the man you become. Don't by into the madness, don't think that this is how things have to be. Cause let us tell you the good life isn't about watching your back, dodging bullets and running the game. The good life is a safe space for you and your family, getting to do something that you love and are proud of, maybe taking trips or buying music or going to the park to kick it. The possibilities are endless. Don't limit yourself – think big.

Too Complicated

My life got complicated when I came to juvenile hall. Why? I can't do what I want to do. When I used to be out on the street, I woke up when I wanted to wake up, ate when I wanted to eat, and did what I wanted to do when I wanted to do it.

Man, I used to smoke everyday, all day. When I'd wake up, first thing in the morning I'd be out there selling my stuff on the block. You heard me? Money was the only thing I had on my mind. But now, I feel there's a time for change, because some things are starting to get boring. I'm starting to get older and wiser.

I'm trying to change my life around slowly, but surely — and I will. Life is too short to be out there wit' all that bullshhh that goes on in the street. I'm really tired of seeing my young souljahs die everyday behind stupid stuff. You heard me? I just gotta say: Stop doing what the freak man you want to do, so five-oh can throw you in jail and treat you like a slave!

-Young Chase, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're seeing things pretty clearly now. Money will always have to be part of the picture in this world we live in, but when it's all you see — then you set yourself up for a fall and end up in the penitentiary living the life of a neo-slave or dead and buried in a grave at a young age. It's too bad you couldn't have seen past that fast money in the street before you had to wear these shackles on your feet, 'cause the system's a pimp, the game's a whore — and you were the trick, the mark, fa shore! But now that you know the score, you'll no longer volunteer to live behind a locked door. Thanks for sharing wisdom, even while you're still locked up in the system.

No Such Thing As Do Overs

If I could pick one do over in my life it would most definitely be the day I got locked up. I would have not smoked in my car or gotten off the smell at the car wash when I had the chance. If I would have done these simple little things the police would not have searched my car. Stupid stupid stupid. I think about this topic every night. A lot of the time it prevents me from sleeping but there is no such thing as a do over.

-Zeke, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is nothing worse than that feeling of total and utter frustration when thinking about something that could have easily been avoided and made life a hell of a lot easier. But let's go back to what you said you should have done differently – you should not have been smoking period, let alone in your car. Getting the car washed might have saved you this one time and no doubt you would have kept smoking in the car until you got caught. So really it would have delayed the inevitable because mark our words – everyone's luck runs out. Some people get caught the first time they mess up. Some people never get caught by the cops but pay the price some other way. Learn from this and move on.

Could It Get Any Worse?

What's up Beat? This is the homeboy Young Lazy from Hayward just saying what's up to all the folks that's locked up.

I'll tell ya'll what rock bottom is – rock bottom is when you are doing so bad you don't think things could get any worse. You think they can't get any worse but you can see things are still getting worse. You are doing the grimiest things but everyday they are getting worse. You feel you can't get it through the hard times but you can.

-Young Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: How do you get through the hard times? How do you make yourself believe that everything will be all right when everything is so horrible? Many people see rock bottom as the worst thing that could happen to a person. Sometimes it takes us to a place where we don't want to go but have to go in order to make some real changes in our lives. Sometimes hitting bottom is the only way to start going up.

Dead Trav Walking

i don't care that so many are zombies or whatever
"just walking around"
just remember the blood inside me is mine
and although i know i shouldn't have to fight for it
i will even though violence doesn't prove anything
i'm not going to lie down and let some fiend suck my life away
i will be the last one to be taken
i will fight till the end
zombies i can deal with
now what about my "friends"

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When your friends lead you into trouble on the street, for real, they are more dangerous than strangers packing heat. But it's your own mind that keeps sending you back to the grind, and has you ready for fighting to the end even though you know violence is the road to death for you and your "friends".

Relly Bo at Camp

Man, this Relly Bo! I know I ain't wrote to The Beat in a min', but I'm going to talk about these cats in Camp. Man, these cats is so fake! Talk about they do this and that, and bust that gat! Me, Relly Bo, I'm staying solid. You know? I go home and mess with family and my baby'mama.

I ain't gon' name no names, but people are gettin' killed left and right — droppin' dead like flies! For what? Nothing! Me, I'm tryin' to tech my brother how to do right instead of sellin' dope or robbin' people. Me, I got a job. I work on houses, doing construction work. Now that's solid!

But these cats come back from their HV's (home visits), talk about, "Oh, I popped hella pills!" Or sayin', "I got hella money this week and messed wit' hella beezies!" I keep to myself up here. When I go home, I do what I do, then come back and don't tell nobody anything what I did over the weekend.

Man, this Camp program is easy. The staff are PO's (probation officers) now. But stuff is startin' to make me stress, 'cause my baby is going to be born in abut six more months. I get out the first day of September.

To all, stay solid. Get out and be a man, 'cause that old man inside of you is going to come out soon — and that's what happened to me. I got my priorities straight now! So take care y'all in the Hall, or incarcerated period. Man, do right for once; you already did wrong. So stay up. Love ya. One love to my folks.

-Relly Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, it's great to hear about the changes you've made — or that becoming a father made in you! Still, it takes a man, to man up like that! We remember your first pieces in our 'zine. They were entertaining, the story of your careening out of control, heading inevitably for disaster even as you thought you were "working it"! Now you've turned yourself around, got both your feet on the ground. Like they say, you are now of sound body and mind, not to mention strength of the spiritual kind! You may still have a skeleton in the closet though, and if you do — don't let it pull you back into the whirlpool of drama, chaos and crime that first got you here doing time. But we think you'll come through, 'cause you understand how to respect the man in you.

Power Within

i've had many times when i've lost strength
power, stability — whatever you want to call it
but i got it back
now i'm on track
to betta times
rhymes, mix-tapes, cd's, women and ice
i could mess up and lose power again
but i'm gone when i make it big
'cause guess what
money brings power, strength and respect
but forget money and power
neither one brings happiness

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: One kind of "respect" comes from fear, and another from seeing someone with something you want and wanting to get near. But the wise man learns to respect those who possess the inner strength to find happiness in a world of dog-eat-dog savagery, trouble and stress. Ice is nice, but a heart of gold is beyond any price!

Power Outage

power outage means to me
that i lost my mind
and i can't go on
people make me shut down
and stop life
because some people
are so mean and ugly inside
that i have to lose my mind
and act crazy
power outage comes
when i'm done being crazy
and i seen what i did
that's what power outage means to me

-John Doe Juggalo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've just explained the closed system of sporadic violence that characterizes incarcerated existence — and it is indeed a power outage as each individual surrenders his freedom of thought and action to this mean and ugly social norm that wears you down minute by minute, hour by hour, fraction by fraction, until violence explodes in your brain like a nuclear chain reaction. It's tragic but not inevitable. Rise above, and you'll feel power incredible as the magic of love.

My Last Beat Within Piece

What's up, Beat! This is my last Beat Within piece. I don't know what to say. Camp is easy. I got a perfect program — platinum badge, President of Leadership, on student council, did Cornerstone (program), was a TA for Granny, did volleyball and boy scouts, did a speech for the chief of the institutions, passed my High School Exit Exam, passed my GED, getting a job in a week, was a kitchen worker, and I'm presently going to college (University of Phoenix, online).

I did all that in five-and-a-half months, and now I'm getting released — straight release! I got real lucky, never caught for anything I did do. I was going to get into hella fights, but I had homies calm me down. Thanks to all the homeboys and homies that looked out for me; I wouldn't be getting released so soon without them.

A'ight then, Beat, I'm leavin' this county and going back to Santa Clara County.

-Sharky, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you're in San Jose, drop by DeBug. You're already hip to the internet, 'cause you're doing college that way! You'll fit right in. Do some writing for them. Oh, but you can't call yourself Sharky when you're back down there — that name's banned from the San Jo Beat. You feel? Major props and utmost congratulations on doing such a fine program. You've been a star for The Beat since the get-go, but alas that doesn't always go together with getting your life together. We are so pleased to see your success. And it's nice to hear how homeboys can help keep you out of trouble instead of drawing you into it! That is true homie love. But now, watch that temper, and put some real effort into learning how to calm yourself down. You might try repeating the Serenity Prayer over and over: "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." We see lots of courage — the courage to change! — in you. It's been a privilege getting to know you. Keep up the good work. Much love and respect.

money brings power,
strength and respect
but forget money and power
neither one brings happiness

Something To Think About

The only one who seen it all -
All the numbers,
All the names,
To indicate you played the game.
But you come empty handed
And you leave them all the same.
And you want things to change
But they don't.
As people still stalk in the alleys,
With all the same mentality
Recruits without honor
But keep it all in the family.
Pills affecting the young
Making us all just
Blind
Mute
And dumb.
Pumping our veins
And putting us under the thumb.
So if it's on the TV
Turn it off.

-Doc Gt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well you gave us all something to think about with this poem. This just goes to show how a few words, put in the right order, can knock on your you know what and make you say, "Damn he has a point." We hope that there are some other young people who look at this and say, "He might be right – why should I put myself under thumb?" People are always trying to sell something. It's nice to know that there are some folks out there who are looking at the big picture and not just living in the moment.

My Fear of Satan

Satan is the Devil.
He has claws and he's pointing at you.
You can't defeat him so stay away from him.
You gave up time to waste for him.
He needs to take a break from focusing on me
-he is hating on me.
I try to break free.
God can give me to hope
- I know right from wrong.

-Brandon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The fear of devil and his horrible influence have been around since the beginning of time. At the end of the day we have to do think before we act and accept that we just can't do what we want when we want it.

This Is My Time

This topic really brought me back to my childhood. When I read the part where it said, "Remember when you were a kid and you were playing kickball or baseball and you messed up? Sometimes you would shout out, 'Do over.'" Man I sure remember them times but to be real I would use it now because everyday you learn something. Today I feel more educated then I have ever been and it won't take me 'till I'm 25 to realize that I have messed up. I would call "do over" to put me back at the beginning of high school because that's where my life went all bad. This has brought back memories and this is my "do over."

-Byrd, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Funny how a word or phrase can erase years in our mind. We like the sense of determination coming out of this piece. We can feel that you are ready for some changes. Easier said than done but at least you have your mind in the right place. In real life there are no "do overs"but there are second chances. When you get yours, don't waste it.

Should Have, Would Have, Could Have

Usually I have no regrets because I believe everything happens for a reason.

The thing that I do regret though is meeting this one girl and messing with her. It was just after I started working things out with my ex-girlfriend; we hadn't seen each other for about a month. We had broken up because she was seeing someone else. It broke my heart but she was worth giving a second chance.

We were about to get back together but I started messing with another person while we were separated and continued to mess with her. By the time I stopped messing with the other girl, it was too late and I hurt my love. Things didn't work out.

So I am here to say sorry - I wish I could stop the game, go back and call re-do.

-Lil' Drew, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We have all been there – there are times we just want to reach back, shake ourselves and say, "What the hell are you doing!? You are going to blow it." This is why hindsight is the greatest and most evil of tools; we hope that you have learned something from this experience that will help you be a better man next time around. And that's all you can do – learn from the past to make sure you don't keep repeating the same mistakes. It's only then that you really lose.

I Love You Brijuanee

Is love supposed to make you feel like
You have everything in the world but you don't?
Is it supposed to make you feel like
You'd do anything in the world to keep it but you won't?
Is it supposed to make you feel like
You've feel like you've found exactly what it was that you were looking for in life?
Is love strong enough
To make the meanest person in the world feel nice?
Is love supposed to make you feel invincible?
Is it supposed to make me feel like
I can make her every wish come true?
Because this is the way I feel when I'm with her.
She's the most precious thing in life;
For the longest time I've felt obligated to make her my wife.
I'm proud to say she's one of a kind
And I thank God that she's mine.
My love for her is something I can't explain
Because I know tomorrow my love for her will be much greater
And the words to describe it won't be the same.
Even though I don't see her,
My love for her grows everyday.
I just want the whole world to know that I love you Brijuanae!
Beautiful
Righteous
Independent
Joyous
Unpredictable
Astounding
Nifty
Affectionate
Exciting

-Byrd, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Byrd you went deep on this one. Letting your emotions be known to the world isn't as easy it seems so good for you for having the courage to talk about your feelings so openly. And you are right, love is a beautiful, magical sentiment that can make poor men feel rich and hardened men feel as light as a feather. But love can also be complicated and gut wrenching. Relationships are very important, and when you are young it can seem like the most important thing in the world. We want to encourage you to continue following your heart but just don't move too quickly. There are no hard fast rules when it comes to love and very few of us can even begin to understand it, but our understanding is a lot better as we get older.

Having Twins Is A Hassle

People think having twins is easy but it's not.
I got twins,
a boy, Taevian, and a girl, Daivianna.
They are a hassle.
I have to take them everywhere with me.
I'm still in high school and I have to take them to my grandmother's house and then take my booty to school.
I get mad when people tell me they want twins and I tell them they don't.
I tell them take care of mine for three hours and see what it feels like
and then when an hour passes by they want me to take them back.
My daughter is always mad and my son is always crying.
Regardless, I love my kids no matter what,
even if me and my baby daddy fight and never stay together.

-Monica, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Having one baby is pretty hard for an adult. For a teenager in high school, it's crazy stressful. But having two would be difficult for anyone. Just remember that if you let them see how stressed you are and anything you say to them, they way you treat them, the tone of voice you use with them, it all stays there. It gets programmed into their brains. So maybe you didn't make the best choices, you had babies young, you're in jail, etc. But now is your chance to make good for your babies. But you'll need help and you shouldn't be afraid to ask for it.

It's Not The Same

I wake up in the morning
Brush my teeth
It's not the same
In school
It's not the same
Eat lunch
It doesn't taste the same
Go outside and play basketball
I don't play the same
I go take a shower
I don't feel the same
I listen to music
It don't sound the same
I watch a movie
It don't look the same
I go to sleep
I don't sleep the same.

-Terrell, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Terrell, what's the reason behind everything changing? What is still the same? Incarceration can change your life and the simplest things like that!

Complicated and From the Heart

My life started to get complicated as I got older, because the things I wanted has changed from school to girls, smoking and drinking.

But then I didn't have money all the time to smoke, crime or take girls out. See I was tired of being broke so I started to grind, steal or whatever I could to get money. That didn't get me anywhere but back in the hall. Now I think that God is giving me a sign to change my life, and I think it's it's time too. Man I really had to get my life back together and stop oplaying around like time can just be wasted like that.

I know when I get out of this hell hole I'm really and truly from the heart, I'm going to change for me and my family.

-Vessel, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you believe this, then cut out this piece from your Beat when it's printed, and keep it with you in your pocket. Every time you get tempted to do soemthing messed up, take it out and remember the public promise you made to yourself!

Oakland-Life-Rock Bottom

I was cookin' and bakin' that crack,
Sellin' weed by the sacks.
But now I'm locked up and my life is whack.
Just like it sounds, it is what is.
If I could go back, I would never have pop that thizz
'Cause it had my mind going crazy.
I wasn't listenin' to my mother and I was her only baby.
Hangin' out on them streets.

-Demetris, 150 Crew

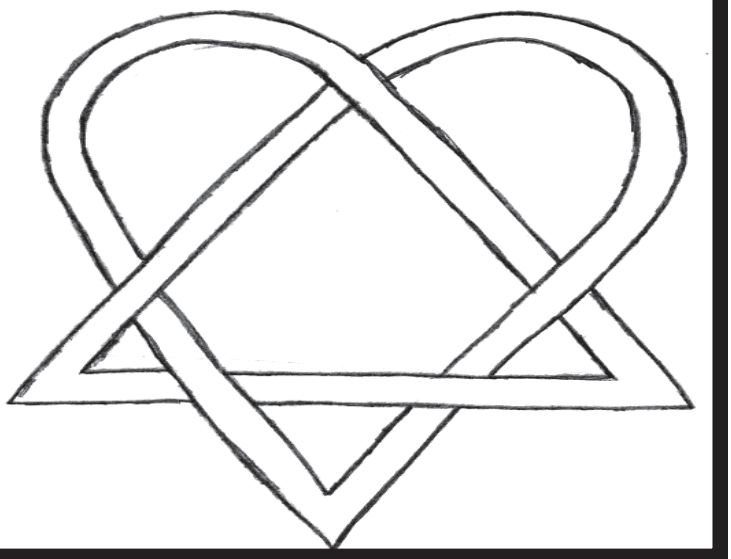
From The Beat: We like this piece a lot; it flows well, bringing your words to life. Looking back it's a lot easier to see what you should and should not have been doing. Making mistakes is inevitable but making the same mistakes over and over again is not okay. So learn from the past and be a better man, not just for your mom but for you as well.

Love And Loss

I wish I could go back in time and change everything.
I wish that I never used drugs because I wouldn't be in this kind of place.
Then there are times that I'm glad I did do some things 'cause I wouldn't be going out with this girl. I'm glad I'm with her.
I've never been in love with a girl like this.
I got her pregnant and she had a miscarriage.
When I found that out I cried.
Everyone told me men don't cry but when I did I knew men did cry.
I just wish she would be there when I get out.
I don't want her to leave me 'cause I don't know what I would do without her.
She tells me she will never leave me and I just hope that's true 'cause life wouldn't be the same without her.

-Iggy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: First and foremost, of course men cry. You are human, right? If so you are entitled to let your emotions out in the most human way possible – tears. You and your loved ones will be far better served if you let your emotions out in a healthy way, instead of carrying around all this pain and anger. We are so sorry to hear about your child. Funny how when you start thinking about changing the past you start to see the things you would want to keep the same. Sometimes we can't get the good stuff without getting some bad stuff. We hope things work out with your girl and you can get your life back on track, but even if things don't work out, it will not be in the end of the world. It will hurt but you will live and if you are lucky, love will find it's way to you again.



Fear Of My Father

My greatest fear used to be my father because he was on drugs and used to abuse us for no reason. He would accuse us of letting men sleep with our stepmother, put us on a 50lb bench press plate and hit us with a horsewhip. Yes I overcame it.

-Angelo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You are strong young man and we are sorry to hear that your dad let his demons get the best of him, which he then took out on his own children. At least it sounds like you have learned from his mistakes and will be a better father for it.

Love or Lust?

What I'm writing about is true love. And how do you know it's true love. Truthfully I don't think I know what true love is. Reason being is because I feel if that's what a girl wants to hear then I'll say it. It sounds messed up, but it's the truth.

I know that there is a soul mate for everybody but then again I feel ever y female that is cute and/or has a nice shape that I can fall in love with her. So basically, I don't know what love is, just lust.

-Dave, 150 Crew

From The Beat: One thing we've learned from reading Beat writers for so long, is that if someone writes the truth, it can't really be messed up. We'd bet half the people in the Hall (make AND female) secretly agree how hard it is to tell the difference between heart and hormones. At the first level, it seems things are all about the physical attraction, but then as we get more mature, and older, the deepr feelings come our way... you had the honesty to write what a lot of people feel...now you might want to consider taking that honesty to talking to the girls too... because when you lie to a woman, it always bites you in the end.

My Fear

This point in my life is hard. Right now, nothing I can't handle. But right now, it sucks. I'm going to YA, and I'm scared. I'm not scared of what might happen, or what's gonna happen with me fighting, or doing something that I will have to do, 'cause I could just get back up and move on. Stuff happens.

I just don't want to get time added. I want to get out and be with my homies and doing whatever and get some priorities. I guess I just have to handle my business and deal with the consequences. It sucks, but it's the reality, and there's no way to run from it.

-Jessica, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: We hope you open up your heart and let the pain out. You wrote a great poem, recently. It was sad and painful stuff, but you must have felt better letting all that poison out. We hope you will keep a journal while you're serving your time. And we would love to hear from you. So please, consider writing to us, C/O the Beat Within. Our best thoughts are with you.

Complicated

sometimes people feel upset and frustrated
irritated because the way they livin' is complicated
from home to school, money, police and girls
no matter how you live there is always problems in the world
life is always gonna be complicated
— live with it

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Two short poems this week, and both teach with every word they speak. The real issue becomes how you react to your complicated problems — add to 'em or work your way through 'em.

Having Nothing

My life is complicated because when I was young I didn't have nothing.

My family was poor, we stayed in the projects, and went through nights without lights, with no money to pay the rent and boards on the windows.

I been through it all. I then seen my cousins and friends get shot in my face and everything.

-Adrian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The mark of a gifted writer is when you can use your words to make people feel you... just these few bits of description gave an incredible window into your struggles, your life so far, the troubles you've seen. You have an important story to tell, the world should know what America has looked like through your eyes. We're looking forward to reading more of your writing, and learning more from you.

The Game Played Me

My life got complicated when I choose to sell drugs, but I didn't realize that until I had a power outage. Which means the police finally caught up to me and now they have me where they want me. And I thought I was playing the game, but the game played me in a serous situtation, to where I don't know if I can handle it or not.

I thought my life was money, cars, clothes and shoes, but now it's complicated, and I never thought about this in past, and never repaired myself for this situation. And now it's two months and a half before I touch eighteen , so they know they played well and I'm wondering should I get out the game. But to me, it's like comin' out of a coma. I'm tryin'.

But I just hope I get help and make it out, before I see my life pass me by. Or let soemone take my life into their own hands.

-Lucon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "To me, it's like coming out of a coma." That's one of the deepest things we've heard in a long time, because sometimes it feels like people are almost unconscious of the world when they're caught up in the game. Like they're acting without thinking, without using their minds... and maybe this is what happened to you, but this piece makes it seem like you're also starting to wake up. One thing for sure, you deserve a better view than a cellblock wall.

no matter how you live there is always problems in the world life is always gonna be complicated

My Music Is My Beach

See, I don't go to the beach. The beach, to me, is my music — the Insane Clown Posse!

It lets me escape from the people around me and the things that I don't like in life, so I can think about good things, like — myself, my mom into a drug program, and my loving dad that was always there!

-John Doe Juggalo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shakespeare: "If music be the food of love, play on; give me excess that I may surfeit, and so, die." Yeah, die to all those things you don't like, and live for those good things you mention above! Tell us more about the ICP!

I thought my life was money, cars, clothes and shoes, but now it's complicated, and I never thought about this in past, and never repaired myself for this situation

Up on a Tombstone

Man, what is life?
Some say it's hard,
some say it's easy.
But me, I'm confused.
I been through ups and downs
but now I think I got it on the right page.
After I get out of Juvenile Hall, I'm gonna go back to school
while I can still can fix it, before I'm up on a tombstone, feel me.
But I ain't really got that much to say so I'm gon' end it like that.

-Yv, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Funny to see how you've made this incredibly profound statement about what you want in life, and then wrote that you didn't have much to say – you used few words, but your statement was the heart of the issue! It would be cool to hear more about what some of those ups and downs have been.

My Life on the Streets of Oakland Part IV

The Group Home

After I hung up with my grandfather I was thinking about running the next day but I didn't want to be on the run, so I had stayed at the group home and did what I did.

So after the night was over I had called my sister to see if she had made it home, and she did, so she was talking for a minute, and then I asked if she can get me some new clothes. She told me she was going to bring them to me the next day. Then we hung up with each other. After I got off the phone I went to my room and went to sleep.

The next day I woke up and went to the bathroom to take a shower and stuff and get dressed and stuff. After I took my shower I went outside to get some fresh air. When I went outside I had seen this pretty girl outside of the house, and so I walked up to her to introduce myself. I had told her my name, and she told me her name. Her name was Vanessa, and she was 5'5" and had a pretty face. She was light skinned and had a sexy body and some sexy eyes with that body she had.

After that we had talked for like an hour and a half, and after we was done talking she gave me her number and told me to call so we could talk again. So from then on we were friends.

-Lil Manman, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Chapter Four ends on a high note, with you meeting a girl who sounds like she's not only cute but also good to talk to. Are you still together? We know this story doesn't end well, because here you are in the Hall, but as always, we're glad read it and print it, and anxiously awaiting your next installment!

Be With You

You are my one and only,
With out you I'm lonely,
I want you by my side holding me,
You're my heart with the key,
You're the key to my heart,
Where ever we finish I will always be here to the end
To the start,
I hate to cry, it's not hard to do your best and try,
I've never lied, I've never cheated
My last love broke my heart it was hard but it was
Defeated
My love for him was done & beated
I really can't be with out you,
I love you,
You my love, my boo,
I hope you feel the same way too,
Look what happened,
Hell, jail, no bail
It's really hard to tell
I love you,

-Tabatha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Nice rhymes. Now take it a step deeper and remember there's more to life than your teenage boo, though it might be hard to imagine now.

The Beach

During our hard times and our good times, we were at the beach, the beach by the pier! That's the first beach we went to. Remember after the Gallileo game against the Mission? Then our hard times…when you fell asleep on my lap…the cold night of confessions! I kept you warm in my arms as you confessed to me. "You wanna leave me, babe?""Never! You're the biggest part of the getaway!" Then the Friday stroll to the beach…when we ate at In and Out…

Then the next episode—conversing over the sunset…our love life's progression…I would catch you if you fall. What kind of love would that be? If I let you drop beneath me?

We rise to the top together…shining stars…I remember the last time…I wanted you to come to China Beach with us? I was so anxious. You stood me up, though! When you arrived after I left…It's cool, though…We went to Baker's Beach…the beer…the bathroom….Shhh…forget the beach. The beach sucks! I didn't like the beach any of those times. That's a New Year's resolution—to have some good times at the beach! To just get up and go to the beach…like the movies.

The beach…the beach…the beach! Chou. Peace.

-Biggie Littles LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Isn't it amazing that whenever you think of a place, like, say, a certain beach, you always associate it with what has happened to you, bad or good, before? And it's like that place is forever sacred or cursed! You sound like you have/had a wonderful lady. Are you still together? We hope you can get your program at the Ranch together, finished and be able to go home and start a new chapter in your life.

Fear

When I was young I was afraid of the dark. I thought I was going to get jumped out of nowhere and killed. I wasn't afraid when I was indoors, but when I was outside and alone, I just didn't like being alone. I watched a lot of scary movies, is why. But then I got bigger and realized I was the one who makes people afraid of the dark.

-Shane, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is good writing. That's a great twist at the end. We hope you woke yourself up with that realization, and that you don't really want to be the source of anyone's fear.

This Is Complicated

Thinking of what you did to get in jail, but you still
Hesitated.
I feel trapped,
One moment you feel good and the next thing you
know you are
Annoyed and you just snap.
I'm confused,
I don't want to be here, this is not what I choose,
It's either you win or lose.
I chose to win, but I'm up in the hall so I lose
I know my rights,
I got to go to sleep knowing I can't sleep cause this
Hot night,
The thing I can only do is be strong and fight,
Strong is the key,
I just want to grow up and be what I want to be,
But the judge make it complicated.
My hope just faded.
I got people telling to keep my head up,
I've had enough
Being in this little small room is tough
Thinking and not knowing when you're going to get
out
I just wish I can go home,
Safe and sound and rest my dome.
Life is complicated.
Half my life has been shaded.

-Tabatha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Keep writing and keep reading your writing. You know your own feelings and need to remember them when they are far behind you. Keep in mind that your decisions affect your life, and other's, and control comes from self-awareness.

The thing I can only do is be strong
and fight,
Strong is the key,
I just want to grow up
and be what I want to be

Murder Case

My life got complicated when I caught that murda case in January. Thank God that I was given a second chance to succeed.

Havin' my mother pass through, that was the worst feeling I have ever had, because it was breakin' me up to see my mother walk out the unit with tears in her eyes. I love my mother and I'll do whatever it takes to make her happy — that is why it hurts me so bad when I see her upset!

-Karlitos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What it will take to make her happy is for you to get out of that gangster life that already has very nearly cost you your freedom for the rest of your life — and cost your mother having you outside the walls of incarceration to be a part of her life. You say you'll do whatever it takes? If you're real about that, you can start writing the list of what you need to do, what it will take, 'cause deep down you know exactly what that is. Right?

Power Gone

damn — the power's out
you can't see me, can't hear me shout
it was like this before i came here
living like a thug with no fears
but the streets had my name on a tombstone
my block, that was my home
i had my crew, but i was alone
only a youngsta, tryin' to be grown
no power in my life, my power was in the streets
that's why i'm now writin' in these beats

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now we feel the power that beats in your chest. Now you're willing to take control of your life and do what's best, you've survived the shock of lock up and passed the sanity test. You see that what it takes to be alive and free is the absolute necessity to rise above the street, 'cause "enjoying" its power spells certain defeat — ending in an early grave or becoming the correctional system's neo-slave.

My life

life's hard it goes by fast
and i want to make mine last
keepin' it protected, like a whole body cast
tryin' to live, tryin' to not get blast'
but life gets so complicated
people talk, things get stated
then all of a sudden i'm the one hated
but I'm not defeated, i'm not check-mated
so i gotta prove myself — but to who
you ain't my boys, you ain't my crew
i know what i'm about
i ain't got to put it out
there ain't no need to shout
i'm eatin' over here while y'all in a drought
but still shhh get rough
gotta put an image up, gotta be tough
fluck it, i got to live no matter what
so i ain't writin' no more of these "but"s

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Living life without excuses is just the opposite of the street-wise ruses used to perpetuate a self-defeating attitude. All those hard platitudes that get repeated are self-hypnosis to keep the crew united in group psychosis as one by one they fall to a rival's bullet or the long arm of the law. You got it right in this rhyme, it's for real "no matter what" time to change your ways, no if's and's or but's — 'cause you've got nothing to prove to no one else, just to yourself, that you're tough enough to see the truth and follow through with what you know you need to do. Be living proof it can be done. Be the one.

It's Complicated

i be like, aw man, it's complicated
doing everything on your own, man
feel responsible for everyone in yo' home, man
and when you feel like everything is wrong, man
i'm gon' stand, 'cause i am a grown man

-grown man, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This little poem is so good, it deserved a name. Thanks for writing it. We hope you see it in print, 'cause we know our readers feel you.

Scared People

People talk it
But can they walk it?
People say they gangsta
But throw they hands up
Like some wankstas
People think they hard
But really soft
People talk behind yo' back
But can't say it to yo' face
People need other people
To make themselves feel better
People talk loud
So other people can hear them
People say they on yo' head
But really don't know you and can end up dead
People need to get heart
Because they messing with the wrong person
Judge a book by its cover
And you see what's under?!?!?

-Cash LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Nice poem, Cash! Your observations about people can often be true, but do you have any heart or understanding of these people who front being hard or gangsta? What's behind the mask? What motivates one to pretend to be who they aren't? Are they just learning to become men? Is there abuse, neglect, cruelty, confusion, at home? Do they fake whatever in order to find out how that persona feels like, in order to be able to grow into it for real? How can you give people who front the affection and approval they probably need until they can grow into someone they're proud of?

We're History

I wish I had invisible pockets.
That way when Five O searches me
I don't have to breathe hard.
That way I could hide the white stuff
that looks like sand.
They consider us thieves.
They lock us up.
We're history.
I have no faith. I go to sleep.
I wake up with five walls and a locked door
with nothing to do but look out a window.

-Shane, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Hey, this is a good poem, but don't you think it would be a whole lot easier to stop using the white stuff than to count on magic.

but I'm not defeated,
i'm not check-mated
so i gotta prove myself — but to who

But I Try

Through all of the ups and downs the warrants,
violations, and new cases
Turning myself in
But still scared to go to court
And see all those mean, serious faces
Even though I may front or lie
At the end of the day I can say
"But I try"

Running from my group homes
Sitting up crying calling my mom on the phone
Don't know what to say
But I gotta let her know that I'm okay
Just so I can know
I handled the situation the right way
Even though I may cry
At the end of the day I can say but I try.

Always feeling like, I'm the one singled out
The girl that no one wants to see make it out
The one picked on for always doing wrong
I tell myself "I'm not stupid, nor dumb
And there's nothing wrong with where I come from
Even though I may sit and ask myself "why?"
At the end of the day I can say "But I try"
Wishing that I could just get up and leave
Wanting to go anywhere just so I can feel free
Don't want anything out of this system
But just to be me
Even though it may seem that
I'm running away from my problems
Because I wish I had wings
So that I can fly
At the end of the day I can still say but I try.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can't believe that a smart girl like you with a mom who loves you and gives such good advice, that you have ended up getting sent to group homes. What are you doing out there girl? Time to get your self together and go home. Just do your program and keep your head down.

Complicated Life

How did my life get so complicated? Honestly I don't know
Maybe it was not listening to my mom and selling dope on the low
Thinking I was grown saying
One monkey don't stop my show if you didn't know
I was referring to my mom now I wish I would've listened
And kept the judge calm
Instead of getting him all riled up
Now he tryna really lock me up
Threatening to give me four years if I run
That's why I'm in here praying like a nun
Hoping he don't ship me away
Praying to God that I see the light of day.
So when I get out I'm going to live my life the right way. Go to school so that I can get educated and try to find out find out how my life got so complicated.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We don't know what in the world a smart and talented girl like yourself was doing selling dope and pissing off judges whan your card was called. You better keep praying aqnd when you get out you'd better apply your skills and intelligence to your education and getting on the right track, not to selling drugs and getting sent to the Y!

Praying to God that I see the light of day.
So when I get out I'm going
to live my life the right way

Am I Really That Special

Am I really that special that you take time out of your day
To not like me just because yo dude all in my and he tryna wife me
Am I really that special
That you got my name in your mouth
Speaking on something, you know nothing about
Am I really that special
That you gonna sit up and talk about me
Making up stories that you want someone to believe
Am I really that special
That you gotta play on my phone
Is it because you like the sound of my voice
Or maybe because I'm the queen of my throne
Am I really that special
That you tryna break up me and my man
Do you think you can do it?
Well I know, there's no way that you can
Am I really that special
That you wanna rob my house
What you want? Is it my clothes, my shoes or the couch
Am I really that special
That you're willing to catch another case
Just because I look better than you
Is it my body or my face?
Am I really that special?
Well guess what you aren't
So you can just get a life and find something better to do
Because I'm not going back to jail
Especially not behind you.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Just remember to keep your cool. Heed your own advice and don't let someone get under your skin so you go out and do something stupid. Remember to turn the other cheek. Excellent poem though Iyshawn. You have real skills.

Betrayed By A Friend

Damn you envy me too?
I didn't even know I was such a fool
I honestly thought you were my friend
Maybe that explains why you was flirting with my man
What is it I got?
That makes you so hot
Why not just ask for it?
Or ask me to help you get what I have
Is it because I'm good at math
Or because I know how to play the game
Whatever's the reason you envy me
I think it's lame
I thought you were my friend
So I would've given you anything
I guess I didn't pay attention to the way you looked.
When he gave me our promise right
I never noticed the smart comments or how you used to hate
I thought you was a solid friend but now I know you're fake
There's nothing you could've done that would've hurt me more
You knew I loved that boy and everything about him I adore
How could you make that stuff up and then go and tell him
Talking about I'm a cheater and I was only playing him
I wouldn't call it cheating because I had no feelings for them
They knew and you knew it too
I can't believe you tried to ruin my life and break up me and my boo
You don't know how good I felt when he said "Baby I forgive you"
But no matter what, I'm still hurt for real though
I thought me and you would be close until the end
Most of all I never thought you would betray me as a friend.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Why did he have to say, "I forgive you?"!!! You're the one he cheated on! And what your friend did is wrong, she's clearly not really a friend, but don't forget to blame that dog whose really supposed to be your best friend!

I didn't even know I was such a fool

I honestly thought you were my friend

Powerless

I felt most powerless when my ex used to beat me. It was like no matter how hard I tried I had no control over my situation so I had to make my lights turn back on. I had to leave him even now I still look around the corner. I am still powerless over how he's damaged me. So yeah my lights are on now but PG&E screwed up then.

-Sara, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Anyone who has ever been abused knows what it's like to feel powerless. But you made a choice to not feel that way anymore and leave your ex. You did the right thing. Who is he that he can hurt another human being? Chances are he was abused himself, but at a certain point we all have to decide what kind of a person we want to be. Good riddance! Don't ever put yourself in a position like that again. No one deserves that.

My Perfect Day Out The Beach

It was September and I went to San Francisco with my ex-boyfriend (at the time we were together) we played in water and walked hand in hand while the sun set. Unfortunately I conceived my child (or misconceived) that day. But if I were older it would have been the perfect end to the perfect day.

-Sara, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Well at least it sounds like your child was conceived out of love and a really positive experience. Your ex may no longer be a part of your life or your child's life and you may feel too young for the responsibility, but if you step up to your responsibilities as a mother and stop going to jail, one day you may say to yourself that that really was a perfect day.

"Should I rob that lady and take her purse?"
"Should I buy that bundle and sell some dope?"
"Do I wanna go back to jail?
Nope!

Bud To Beauty

From a bud to a beauty is the order it grew
When his lost eyes stared at it he knew he was through
For its petals symbolized the end of his day and he knew he was loved
Most in his weak old age.

As the petals tumbled fragile to the cold hearted glass
I looked over in pain at what could be the last cause

A rose without petals is like a body with no soul
I lost my father
At least he played the role
So enjoy the petals while they last because most of the time they're gone too fast.

-Sara, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A very lovely poem with much feeling and thought. How could we have left it out four times!

No More Mistakes

I've made mistakes but I know I can change
Just like Mary J Blige said, "No More Pain"
Well that's about to be me
Because as soon as I get out
I'm out the rain
Done getting wet and washed back to jail
Deep down I know I'm strong enough
To make it out of this hell
All I gotta do is screw my head on tight
And instead of making the wrong decision
I'm going to make the right before I do something dumb
Think about it first
"Should I rob that lady and take her purse?"
"Should I buy that bundle and sell some dope?"
"Do I wanna go back to jail?
Nope! See that's all I gotta do is think about coming here
Then off top my mind is clear but what I really need is to get my priorities straight.
And instead of going at that fast pace go at a slow rate.
With all the strength that I have now
I know that I have what it takes to make no more mistakes.

-Iyshawn, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We really want to believe you Iyshawn, because we know how damn smart you are, but it's clear from where you're sitting that you can make some pretty poor choices despite yourself. (We love having your pieces in The Beat though!)

Trials And Tribulations

Life is filled with trials and tribulations
From livin' the street life to getting' an education
From seein' my dad committin' homicide to suicide
Thank God he only got to suicide
Don't get me wrong, I loved my dead to death
But he almost took me and my brother's last breath

Life is filled with trials and tribulations
From livin' the street life to getting' an education
From seein' my mom smokin' crack back to back in the other room
Lockin' herself up like she was in a cocoon
I was hopin' she would turn into a beautiful butterfly soon
She did but it took her kinda late to bloom

-Jesse

From The Beat: It always makes us sad to read pieces like this — sad and angry at a society that allows children to grow up in conditions like this. Of course you love your dad and your mom, but they weren't prepared to have children, the most difficult and responsible job on earth. When you say that it took your mom "kinda late to bloom," can we assume that she's blooming now? Is she drug free? How 'bout you, Jesse. Can you look at these two people whom you love and make the decision not to follow in their footsteps?

The Day That Changed My Life

Dedicated to Lamar, Jr.

January 26, 2006 at 9:29 p.m. is when I first heard the cries of my newborn son. After 9 months of pregnancy he was finally here. At that time I was in a group home for pregnant and teen moms. I was very scared because I didn't know if I was gonna be a good mom. This day changed my life because now I not only have to take care of myself but my son. It was very hard at first but as a single teen mom I think I've done very well. My son means the world to me and I thank God every night for blessing me with him. Even now that my son is 6 months he's still changing my life.

-A Young Mom

From the Beat: Having a child forces you (a child yourself) to grow up very quickly, and to acknowledge that another life depends entirely on you. That is an awesome responsibility. In truth, being a mother is the hardest job in the world, but also the most rewarding. As you learn about the world with your son, every day will bring new insights, new highs (and some new lows), and every day you both will grow together.

Why You Play Me?

Why you play me?
I met you and I dunno why
I trusted you so much
I gave you my heart
And I even moved in with you
And you did me wrong
You said you left your jaina for me
But you never did
I had to face her
And she told me she loved you
And that's what broke my heart
Then finally you left her for me
I rode with you
I defended you
And I fought for you
And after all that
You gave me that disease
Now I'm sick but I'm getting cured
And if you think we still together
Hell nah! I caught you in all your lies

-Morenita

From The Beat: Even though this is a personal communication, we're hoping it serves to warn others of the possible consequences of, among other things, unprotected sex. You say you're getting cured, but which disease are you trying to cure? We think you're suffering a disease even more serious than the one you're taking medicine for, and that is the disease of the street (which includes girls who allow shady boys to treat them any way they want). Start loving and respecting yourself, Morenita, and you will be that much closer to a cure to a disease which, if left untended, will bring you down and keep bringing you down.

Tears In My Eyes

Tears in my eyes
With my blanket by my side
Wishing that no one sees me cry
For I wish you were by my side
Sittin' here with no hope
Thinking about my life
Remembering why I'm here
Man I miss you so much
"East Unit" I hear them call
But there's no one in the hall
Waiting for the word release
But it hasn't come to me
Praying to the Lord
Wishing that I'll see his face
But he's in a different unit
So all I could do is
Sit here and cry
Without him by my side

-Taz

From The Beat: We've read far too many pieces from Hillcrest that are wrapped around some boy that defines everything in your life. It is understandable that love would be a major preoccupation with anyone your age. But look at where you are, and decide what is most important in your life. As far as we're concerned, the line in your poem that needs some realistic thinking about is "Remembering why I'm here..." Remembering why you're here is very important, but it's not enough. It requires more than just remembering to be able to avoid the same consequences in the future. Praying to the Lord is not enough. The Lord wants more from you than "wishing to see his face." Are you listening to His prayers?

My Best Friend

I miss you a lot
We never been apart this long
While you are still there
It's been so long
I'm so sad, I think about you day and night
I know that you wanna be with me
But that can't be
We will lose our good relationship
An' end up breaking up
I don't ever wanna lose you as my friend
Me and you been through it all
You been there when I really needed you
You were my shoulder to cry on
The person to put money in my pocket
When I was struggling
Feed me, and pamper me
At all times
Even when I chose a guy over
My best friend
I know he will be gone someday
And you won't
But I am too blind to see
I know you understand
An' I love you till this day
I'm here till the end
Through thick and thin
Nobody can ever understand
W'at me and you have
It's too special of a relationship
An' nobody can fade us
It's me an' you ride or die
You my best friend
Even though I'm locked up
And you doing time too
I'm gonna find my way to you
Keep supporting you
Keep that head above water
I hope you get out
An' can be there for your daughter
'Cause she needs us as well as I do
I got you when you get out
We doing it big
But handle your thug
I will handle mine
Always an' forever
Your best friend

-Giggles

From The Beat: Well, at least this is a love poem with a difference, focusing on the importance of friendship, which involves a different kind of love. It seems that you understand how physical love can complicate deep friendship. And even more important, you recognize that deep friendship is what is truly important in your life. If both of you are locked up, then both of you have your own individual issues to work on and learn from, because you don't want to be in this position again, where you're living on the memories of the past rather than creating new ones. What you have to figure out is how each of you can hold the other up when you're tempted to fall...

Sad

You said you was the only one to ever love me
An' now you loving her
What did I do to deserve this betrayal
While you out there giving her my engaged ring
I'm here suffering in this hot air
This makes me very upset
Can I ever break out of this
Prison inside my body?

-Pooky

From The Beat: The Beat is not your personal vehicle for writing love letters (or hate letters). The Beat is a resource, a tool to teach. What does this teach? The most important line in this poem is: "I'm here suffering..." Yes, you're here, and as long as your focus is on some silly boy who acted the way silly boys always act instead of on your own issues — the ones that lead you to losing all control over your own decisions by being in here — the less likely it will be that you can stay out of places like this. You are here for things you did, not for things he did. Focus on what's important!

When I Die

When I die
When I die
When I die
Just dry your eyes
I never meant to make you cry
Just dry your eyes

That's a song that I really love. Why? Because basically it's a song that says don't cry. Why? Because there's a second life. And if you cry, just remember when I die, just dry your eyes because I'll see you in the second life.

-Grumpy

From The Beat: Has this song helped you get over the pain of lost loved ones? We think that the tears we shed when someone we love passes are not for that person, who is beyond pain, but for ourselves and the pain we must now carry along with the memories.

Why?

Why did you tell me you were going to love me forever if it was a lie? Why did you tell me to be faithful if you weren't up to it also? Why did you cheat? I'm so hurt by you. I just gotta write in The Beat.

Why you make love to some jaina you don't know? Now she got yo' child inside and you just chill. It hurts me to think about all the love they are getting from you. All the love I never got even with four years. All we ended with was my tears. Why?

-Angel

From The Beat: Oh, come on, Gigglez, enough of this! To be honest, we're tired of reading about this boy who did you wrong. We know it's not as simple as, "Get over it," but we also know that as long as you wallow in the pain that he caused you, then you won't be able to move on. The only answer to your question ("Why?") is that this boy (whose name we have taken out of all of your love poems to him) is selfish, self-centered, interested only in his own pleasure, a liar, a cheater, and unworthy of your love. What other answer could there be?

Some others just can't cope without that dope man pushin' a lot. Coke man, dope man pushin' a lot. Coke man, free base, it's all the same.

The Drama I've Been Through

As a youngsta, my childhood was cursed since birth, day one. January 27, 1989, a star was born with only one promise. And that is death. No one ever told me that life was this hard. And if I knew I wouldn't have brought Sandy into this world.

Rules are made to be broken, so why lock us up? Put us into chains? It only makes us insane.

My life legend shall live on well past my time. My time gone. Could it be so, born another statistic, life without hope.

But someone please, send me the helping hand as tears form, but far from weakness. Some others just can't cope without that dope man pushin' a lot. Coke man, dope man pushin' a lot. Coke man, free base, it's all the same. But don't you see, it's killin' all the young ones, infants at birth. Just sit back man. It's nothing. You can do it. It's something I can do. It's what I believe in and I would fight it to the end.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: You have a certain style of writing, Dreamer, that leaves us wanting more — more details, more information, more explanation. We're curious where your thought takes you when you ask why you should be locked up, since rules are meant to be broken. We have no love for lock-ups, but are you asking for a world without consequences? How can that be? Or, are you saying that breaking the rules should have consequences different from putting you "in chains"? Should there be consequences for those who fill those children up with the poison you wrote about? Like what?

What Is Life To Me?

Life to me is having fun
And bein' me goin' to school
Having a good GPA, like a 4.0
Like me you see it…
What life is to me
Being at home with my mom
And my bro, my sis
That what life is to me

-Lil' R

From The Beat: The things you want in your life are not impossible dreams; they are within your reach. What's your plan for achieving them?

Emotions

Feelings: Sad, unloved, abandoned, confused
Reasons: You cheated on me, and now you have a kid by her and she love you too
Song: Come Back Baby Please 'Cause We…
Artist: Mariah Carey
Reason: I'll always love you. I just don't want to, so I'm not hurt anymore
I Wish: To find someone just like you, but someone faithful and true

-Angel

From The Beat: You've asked for the impossible — a man just like the one who cheated on you, but someone who is faithful and true. If he's faithful and true, then he can't be like the one who cheated on you, can he? Anyway, we wish you luck in love.

A Go Getta Go Gettin'

A go getta, go gettin'
In ta win four deuce digits on rims spinnin'
Baby came in apple bottom Gucci, Prada, I messin' wit it
Hair down to her booty no weave in it, it's authentic
Rose gold it still glisten
Young, talented and gifted on the track and you feel it
Beats so clean know it's me when you hear it
Best parental advisory in presence of explicit lyrics
Leave you delirious I'm so serious
You curious when you hearin' this
And that me

-Go Getta

From The Beat: You're right, we are curious… We'd like to read one of those clean raps whose explicit lyrics advises parents…

You!

Days and nights
Don't know what to do
I can't think, sleep, or eat
Just the thought of you bein' in my mind
Makes me wanna cry
Knowing I gave you my life and soul
You were the world to me an' without you
I wasn't me
Ma girl told me
"He ain't good for you"
I decided to ignore her
I told her that you loved me
That she was wrong an' I was right
I should've known it was a lil' game
Now I'm on my knees asking God
W'at I do wrong so he can play me like this
Now I have my girl tellin' me "I told you"
Few months passed
I sit an' look at w'at it was
I didn't even want to realize
Dat you was doin' this to look all coo'
An' takin' me as yo' fool
Now God has answered me
Givin' me thoughts that you and me
Were never meant to be
Always and forever

-Brownie

From The Beat: Do we have this straight? You've been played by some guy (that your girl told you was going to do you wrong), and you're now ready to pick up and start where he left off? If that's what you're trying to say, then we have no advice to give — except that most of us learn not to put our hand in the same fire twice…

Escaping Reality

I got a drink in my hand
And I am chillin' with my boys
We're not foolin' 'round
Not pullin' no ploys
Layin' in the sun
Everything's cool
Yeah, summer days is fun

I think of an idea
Yeah, let's go get some food
All the guys agree
So we get up and move
We hop in the car
And turn up the beat
I put down my window
As we roll down the street

We pull up to the joint
I can smell the food
My mouth starts to water
And I almost drool
I start to open the door
And then I fall back
The next thing I know
I am looking at a wall
All I can say is to curse and to scream
Now I'm back to reality — it was all a dream

-Jamman

From The Beat: We had to rearrange your last lines slightly, Jamman, because it wasn't Beat appropriate as you wrote it. Like a lot of dreams, this one is within your reach. You know what you have to do to make it come true. Will you?

Remember

When I die
Remember when I die
Boy don't you cry
Just dry your eyes
Did we took too far
That I made you cry?
Remember when I die
When I die boy
I don't want you to cry
Just hold my hand up high
"Nope" I see no light
I'm sorry for the ways
That things went wrong
Between you and me
I'm sorry for the way
I let you down
I'm so sorry
I never thought we would go through this
Remember when I die
Babe, remember when I die
All I want to see last is your eyes
Remember when I die
I want you to hold my hand
I want to see your face
For the last thing in this world
Remember when I die

- Dreamer

From The Beat: Why are you asking to be remembered when you die instead of giving the necessary attention to living? Death will come to us all sooner or later (and we hope it's later), but it's the life we are living between now and then that counts. You are almost an adult. It's time to start thinking more about your life, and less about your death!

The True Side

I see you from time to time
You don't know that I'm interested in you
I can't wait until the next time I see you
I wish you feel the same as I do
You believe in God
You know that He loves you
You wear the yellow ugly shirts
And you say you're going to do good
I hope you see the true side of me
Like I see in you

-Taz

From The Beat: When you're locked up, it's understandable that you'd be attracted to boys who are also locked up, since that's who you see. But be careful about judging a book by its cover — and give yourself some time in freedom to meet others in freedom who might be just as attractive.

The Beach

Remember when it was just me and you, Mom
Right after Dad's funeral last year
We went to the beach in Half Moon Bay
We climbed on rocks and picked up sea shells
You told me stories about my dad
And how he knew he was going to die when he was 38
And how he loved you and me
Even though he was an alcoholic already in early teens
And was murdered just to get a sip
You hugged me and I cried
Not scared to show my emotions inside
I love you, Mom, forever

-Lonely Taz

From The Beat: We feel the tears in our own eyes well up when we read a piece as lovingly written and as touching as this one. We hope that other young people will not only see the tragedy of losing one's father, but the tragedy of getting hooked on alcohol at such a young age, and its terrible consequences. Make your father proud of you by not going down that same path. We know your mother is already proud of you, just as we are. Thank you for this beautiful piece of sad memory.

Difficult Times

My life got complicated once I ended elementary school. I started kickin' it with the wrong people and tryna look cool by staying out later than my curfew, and postin' on the block. I began to believe that money could buy my happiness, so I started hustlin'. Shortly after, I was introduced to backstabbers, two-faced people, and manipulators. I am the one to blame for that, but I will also be the one who takes the credit once I turn my life around.

-Cherry

From the Beat: It sounds like you have realized that while money can buy you materialistic things that might make you happy for a little while, it can't buy you true happiness that comes from an appreciation of life itself, your family and loved ones, etc. Yes, turning your life around is something you can take credit for, a major accomplishment. Now all you have to do is do it!

Going To The Beach With My Brother

I have many beach memories. They are all so good, but each on3e has its categories: family, friends, girls, etc., I think my favorite of all and the one I think about whenever I think of the beach is a recent one, only a couple of weeks before I ended up in this place.

We just met up with my brother's best friend and he was like another older brother to me. my brother's pit bull named Cali was there also. We were just about to leave for the beach, so we stopped off at the Bungalo to get some wraps and forties.

It was not the best weather out, sort of overcast, but it was a great day to me. ever since I was little, spending time with my brother has made me happy, and it always will. I am looking forward to another day just like this one once I get out.

-The Grinch

From The Beat: We hope you get another day like this soon. But we wonder if you can imagine a good day at the beach without those 40s? It is so easy to fall into the trap of believing that good times come out of a can or bottle, until you find yourself under the control of something outside yourself, and then it's all downhill. Anyway, get out and be safe.

Changes

Today I'm gonna talk about me. This life is so complicated. Why do these things have to happen to us so young? I've been through so many things in these couple of years. I'm glad I'm here. I didn't notice nothing in the past. Now I'm the happiest girl.

God brought to me so many new things. Every night, every day of my life I look outside of my window and start to make illusions, why God. ¿Por qué las cosas tienen que pasar así? ¿Po qué? Por favor (Why do things have to be this way? Why?) Please answer me and tell me why. I try to change and now I finally got what I wanted. Thank you Lord.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: It's really sad to hear that someone actually is glad to be locked up. However, there are times that the life inside is better than the life outside (and that's even sadder). We guess that is the case for you, at least temporarily. Tell us how God has answered your prayers. What will be different this time?

All Downhill

I think my life got complicated when I started to smoke weed. I'm from East Palo Alto. I was born March 2, 1990. I also have a twin brother. I started smoking weed at a young age. After that my life started to go downhill. What I mean about my life going downhill is that I started to disrespect my mother. Never went to school and started to take things that didn't belong to me. I'll be getting out pretty soon and they're also terminating my probation. So when I get out I'm going to stop smoking weed and start going back uphill. Thanks Beat. Gone.

-Clarence

From The Beat: We have news for you, Clarence. You don't have to wait till you get out. You have already stopped smoking weed (how long has it been?), and you are already climbing back up the hill towards a life that you know you want. Just keep climbing that hill Clarence. You have our support. Just remember, nothing worth having in life comes easy, so take it one day at a time.

What Is Life To Me?

Life to me is having fun
And bein' me goin' to school
Having a good GPA, like a 4.0
Like me you see it...
What life is to me
Being at home with my mom
And my bro, my sis
That what life is to me

-Lil' R

From The Beat: The things you want in your life are not impossible dreams; they are within your reach. What's your plan for achieving them?

All the money
that gave me wealth
Continuously looking over
my back
Waitin' for someone to attack
Living in paranoia

I Want To Spread My Wings

My life turned complicated at the age 15
Put on to some yayo and started servin' fiends
Money was evil and started making me mean
Do anything for the dolla
I do it by all means
Why did I get in with all of this greed
Being very discreet I even had to make people bleed
Didn't care about anyone
And no one cared about me
So I kept it to myself
All the money that gave me wealth
Continuously looking over my back
Waitin' for someone to attack
Living in paranoia
Day in and day out
I don't care if anyone knows
What I'm about
Don't care I'm 18 and I want out
I can't stand being on the down
For choosing this route
I'm onto bigger and better things
The Lord has saved me
By telling me everything He brings
So all I want to do is spread my wings
And see the things He brings
And be free to be what I want to be

-Ghost Face

From The Beat: It's so interesting that the search for material wealth (the American dream) can bring so much pain, so much misery, so much fear of everything ("Living in paranoia...") You are so lucky to have discovered what a dead-end the money chase is, and to have found the true wealth that life provides to those who open their eyes.

Life Is Not Worth It When It Comes To Death

Oh man! Brothers and sisters, mothers and fathers. "Families." People not caring. Doing stuff you ain't supposed to be doing. Seeing your loved ones fall apart. Seeing your dad beat up your mom at a very young age is hard. As you grow older meeting new friends that gangbang, do drugs. Seeing your homeboys and home girls dying from a color or drugs is sad. Ending up in jail by doing stupid tattoos for your gang. Knowing you have someone who loves you on the outs. Sitting in your cell doing the same shhh over and over. Saying to yourself, "I'm gonna change or do the same thing." That's why I say, "Life is not worth it when it comes to death."

-Soledad

From The Beat: The reason life is worth it is exactly because of death. This is the only life we have, so it must have a value, else why were we given it? Perhaps the purpose of life is to determine exactly what that value is.

The Beach

I have very fond memories of the beach. I use to go there when my auntie stayed up in the projects. I used to collect the sand dollars and use them as pancakes in my play kitchen (because they're circle shaped).

One of my favorite drinks is a sex on the beach.

The beach in Miami is beautiful. I've been out there two years in a row on Memorial Day weekend. Despite all the nasty things that go on because South beach is a track, but it still is beautiful. When my folks hurt my feelings I sat on the beach and cried. When I was getting money I sat on the beach with Fat Joe and we smoked fat blunts. Sorry to put you on blast Fat Joe. I got love for you.

-Furly Gurly

From The Beat: We all have great memories of the beach. The good news is if you stay out of jail, you'll keep making more of those memories for the rest of your life.

My Baby

Today is my lady's birthday. I miss her. I wish I could be out there with her. I talked to my sister and told her to tell her happy birthday. I also told her to tell her that I loved her and with I could be out there with her. So happy birthday baby, love you.

-Young Lazy

From The Beat: Sorry you missed your girl's birthday. Make sure this is the last one that you miss.

Girls

The only thing that makes my life completed is women and money. I'd take them to the movies or to the Cheese Cake Factory. People be like, "Brah you be trickin'." I be like, "It ain't trickin' if you got it." Then that stuff started getting out of hand. They started trying to get pregnant by me, putting holes in my condoms, going to my house tellin' my mom that I was going to be there baby daddy because they know I want kids. I do but not this early.

Money was a big issue because they know that I would be there for my child and take care of it. At one point it got complicated where I had to bounce back.

-Byrd

From The Beat: We realize that relationships are very important to young men but get your mind off those girls and on to what you are going to do for your future. Girls will always be there, trust us, so focus on school or a trade; focus on spending time with friends and family; get a hobby, play a sport but please leave the girls alone for a bit.

Complicated Incarceration

My life didn't get complicated 'cause I came here. I just figure that I should have not did the crime. When I got arrested that's when I realize I'm going back to the hall.

I don't like being here, 'cause sometimes the staff thinks they can talk to you any kind of way. When the staff makes me mad that's when things get complicated and the when I start thinking about how I want to leave and just don't come back.

When I get out this time I'm not going to say it's for sure, I'm go stay but I go try my best, for things won't get complicated next time I'm in here.

-T

From The Beat: T, you loss all your rights, the moment you were arrested and because of that, the staff can talk to you any which way. We think you have made your life much more complicated by breaking the law and coming here. So what will you do the next time? What is your plan to staying out? Or, you don't care, and you'll continue to comeback to this haunt? WE hope you do care about your life, your freedom.

I KNEW

I knew you was the one.
I knew you was the one for me girl.
Grab my hand we can take a flight real real high,
Through the sky of romance.
We're close friends now.
We laying in my bed.
I knew you was the one.
I knew you was the one for me girl.
Now you done let me be girl.
Please come with me baby.
Can't you see you need me in yo' life,
Embracing you tight and calling you my wife?
I am sitting in my bed, reminiscing about what we had.
Now that you are gone,
You playing me.
You hurt me but I am not a fool.
I'm up and going and you're alone.
That means you're not going to be my girl.
Baby won't you be my girlfriend?
Grab my hand we can take a flight real real high,
Through the sky of romance.
We're closed friends now.
I'm on TV
And here you come talking about you love me.
You did not want to leave me
When it's said and it's done
That means we're not one.
BABY THIS A SONG

-Jermaine

From The Beat: Well this is quite the piece. It's almost like you gave your emotions the pencil and said, "Run with it." Love is a tricky thing – it can take us to places we never imagined and to places we never wanted to go. Love can help us find our best selves, the self we know is in there but can't always seem to find. Be the best man you can be for her and for you.

The Street Is All That?

My life got complicated when I caught my first case. Ever since then I have been in trouble and my life changed. If I don't change my life sooner or later it's going to get even worse. My life is complicated because I made it that way and only I can change it - nobody else. My life complicated because I made it that way.

-Lil' Chad

From The Beat: You aren't the first one to feel that life got complicated after coming to the halls – many feel it's like entering a place with a revolving door. You are smart enough to see that you are where you are because of the choices you make. Now that you know what things not to do, what will you do next?

I Didn't Do Anything!

My life is complicated because I didn't do anything, but I'm in the hall, but not for what I did, but they think it's my. But my mama know I didn't do it and can't help me cause she always do. This time I'm on my own. And this is the most complicated time of my life.

-Darren

From The Beat: As difficult as it must be to be in this situation, maybe it's a blessing in disguise, because it looks like it's making you think about things in a new light. What have you learned about yourself, not that you're "on your own"?

Poor Choices

My life became complicated when I chose to leave my auntie's house and live on my own. I chose to hustle and hit licks. Then I came to jail and got sent to a placement. I do get mad sometimes but then I remember that this is the life I chose to live.

-Not Thinking

From The Beat: Good for you for taking responsibility for where you are at right now. It was your choices that landed you in this position. So what now? What are you going to do now? Don't bs yourself into thinking that this how things have to be cause that's not true. Don't take the easy way out anymore and start living the life that you deserve.

Don't Stay Out Over Night

I'm stuck in Juvenile Hall
trapped behind these white walls,
seein' all my friends fall.
Can't wait to be free
so I can take care of my family
and do good,
do the best I can to stay away from the hood,
and do right.
Don't stay outside over night
that's the way you get shot,
--all my homies get shot on the block.

-Marco

From The Beat: This is good advice, and we're sorry you had to learn it in such a painful way. What are other ways to stay safe?

Lil' Chad

Lil' Chad aint bad;
Lil' Chad is just sad.
Lil' Chad sad about what?
Lil' Chad is sad that life is messed up.
Lil' Chad can't do anything but sit back
And get taken.
Lil' Chad is going to stay up.
Lil' Chad ain't bad.

-Lil' Chad

From The Beat: Interesting that you chose to talk about yourself in the third person (saying "Lil' Chad" instead of I) but it works. Your readers are left wondering who is Lil' Chad. We figure he is frustrated and angry about how things are but what is he going to do about it?

The Look On Their Faces

My life started to get messed up when my parents got divorced. I started to hang out with my friends later than usual and we started getting in trouble. I have been getting lucky every time until now. Now I wish that I had never done any of the things I did. I hate to see my brothers comin' to my court day knowin' that they look up to me. So I decided that I am going to be a better person, become a better man.

-Makaki

From The Beat: We all have regrets. Who hasn't looked back and thought why did I do that? The bright side is you are very young and have a whole lifetime ahead of you to make it up to yourself (and your brothers). Divorces are hard, especially on the young people in the family. We hope you are finding better ways to deal with your stress cause it only gets harder as you get older.

Where My Heads At

Hey what up Beat? This is Chakail from Fremont. I'm locked up in here because I smoked weed and wasn't supposed to. But I have a baby on the way so I have to get over to find a job to support my family. I got court this Monday and I pray to the man up above to get me out to be with my family.

My mom, brother, sister and my lady want me home. I hope I am home by this Monday to be back with my family and to have a fresh start. I don't want to come back like last time in a week. I hope I never come back. This goes to all the homeboys - keep your head up. Oh yeah, one more thing - I love my mom and sister and brothers and my lady to the end of time and that's for real.

-Chakai

From The Beat: Congrats on being a dad – you have a lot to do before this baby arrives. But you know what you have to do and it sounds like you are ready to do it. Even when things get tough and you feel like you will never catch a break, don't give up. Don't let yourself get caught up. Show your son or daughter what it means to be a fighter, the kind of fighter who doesn't use his fists or cold words to get his way but instead the kind of fighter who will not let anyone or anything keep him from being a good, hard working father.

It Has Always Been Like This

My life has always been complicated. As long as I've been alive I've been in the hood. It's a never ending battle to survive. People are struggling and it's hard to not get caught up in the b-s. For some of us who are locked up we should be glad cause some of us might be double right now.

Gotta go now. Much love to all.

-Young Lazy

From The Beat: Life in the hood is hard and there is no denying that. Getting caught up is easier than trying to do something different. Maybe locked up isn't always a bad thing – as long as you don't return to the street only to make the same mistakes.

Rock Bottom

A lot of the time I think this is rock bottom but I focus on other people's situations and I feel blessed. I know rock bottom is spending the rest of your life in prison, especially if you had no family to visit.

-Zeke

From The Beat: Things could be worse so you are right to be grateful for the good things you have in your life. But things could also be better and it's time you start thinking about how to make that happen.

RIP

RIP to Emmit, Isaac — my bro'! I miss y'all. Can't wait to see you. Emmit was my ninja, and you gone. You left me.

Isaac, you too! Man, y'all did me bad. I need y'all to come back to me. See y'all when I see you. One love to all that' gone. I am still here for y'all.

-Lil' Cash

From The Beat: The way to be "here" for the dead and the living, both, is to get out the street life that's killing your folks at a young age. It's time to turn the page, put an end to dying young or living in a cage.

Free Me

This yo boy Twon , back in the mix with just a few things for yall. Man I'm still in here stressing but I'm getting out next week. I'm going to a group home in LA and am not going to run because I been there and done that. Anyway, I'm through with all this stuff. I'm just ready to go to my group home so I can do my program and go home to my family. I miss them. Free me!

-Lil' Twon

From The Beat: So it sounds like you are on your way toward freedom and will get another chance to do right and stay out of trouble. You are already on the right track by telling yourself that you are not going to run from your placement. Remember these words when you are frustrated and sick of being away from your family. You can do this so keep your head up and think long term instead of looking for immediate relief.

Rockbottom

Saludos Beat. First and foremost let me start by sending you my utmost love and respect as always. Now with that stated down to biz. This be Looney and I'm starting to realize things, that things I did in the past that were wrong. The hall ain't the place to be. Why be here when you could be with your familia or on the calles? I just wish I could be home.

I might go to ROP or Boys Republic or Thunder Road in Oakland. I hope I go there but wherever they send me I'm gonna stay solid and try to maintain because ending up in the county ain't no joke.

I think this is a rock bottom but till then we'll see what happens. Talk to you next time when pencil meets paper. This is Looney signing out.

-Looney

From The Beat: Thank you for the kind words at the beginning of your piece. So it sounds like you are at more of a crossroads than at rock bottom. You have some choices in front of you and if you chose the wrong path, you could end up exactly where you never thought you would be. Do your program and do better. We are tired of hearing the same lines – I'm going to try to do better. You are at the point where there is no trying, there is only doing.

Can't Wait

I've only gone to the beach once or twice. It was in California but I don't know the name of the beach. I remember when I went there but it was hella long ago. I can't wait to go back to the beach when I get out. I'm going camping with my family and I can't wait.

-Gilbert

From The Beat: Lucky man to go camping with the family when you get out. It will be a welcome change from where you've been spending your time lately - in a tiny, windowless cell. The great thing about being outside is that we can forget about our worries for a bit. It's not good to run from your problems but it is good to take a break. Enjoy your upcoming trip!

My Fear Of Him

It's hard for me to think of something I fear but one fear I can openly admit is the fear of God. And I show this to myself all the time by remembering that there is a thin line between stupidity and fearlessness. I believe if someone does not fear God that they are stupid

-Dwayne

From The Beat: Although short, this piece is very to the point and speaks volumes about your faith. We think it is great that you have such strong convictions and we hope you let your faith make you a better man. We do not think it is right or fair to call someone who doesn't have the same beliefs as you "stupid." Be who you are but don't make anyone feel bad about being who they are.

No Fear

I fear nothing. If something is going to kill or hurt you can't really stop it so there is no reason to be scared. The only thing I fear is God.

-Zeke

From The Beat: That's an interesting way to look at fear and it makes sense on some levels.

Where Am I Headed?

I fear that my baby girl will grow up without a father.
I fear that I won't be resurrected when the Lord comes.
I fear that I can't do right but I will over come and live for once.

-Lil' Ally Bo

From The Beat: There are some things that we can control and should worry about and some that we can't. Take the time to focus on your child and everything else might just

Precious

My sweet baby rose
I love you from your
Head to your toes
Your smiles so bright
Eyes with a twinkle
Heart made of gold
I love you precious
You're my angel

-Regina

From The Beat: It's a blessing to have a light in your life, a precious being that can brighten your day when times are rough. It's important to keep those we love close to our hearts and always remember how you feel about them in those incredible moments. That's part of what's so special about writing. In twenty years you can look back and feel once again exactly as you felt when you wrote this.

Not There Yet

What's up wit' it Beat? This is young Ally Bo and I feel that I haven't hit rock bottom yet. I hope I don't hit rock bottom. It is kind of shady in here but I'll be out in ten days, next Friday. I can't wait to see my baby.

-Lil' Ally Bo

From The Beat: We are glad to hear you haven't reached that point yet. But as a dad who is serving time, we hope your focus is now on that baby. That's the tricky thing about kids – suddenly you can't just live for you because your actions have an effect on someone who needs you.

Knowledge

If I had a chance to do something over, it would be before I got pulled over by the police and we got my car towed. If I had a chance to do that over I would have went the other way and I wouldn't be in the situation that I'm in now. Or maybe I would be in a worst one so I'm grateful.

-Grateful One

From The Beat: You are exactly right – you don't know what would have happened if you had turned in one direction instead of the other. Knowledge doesn't come from luck, it comes from learning.

Camp Is Complicated

Camp is complicated — the people in Camp are complicated. The people in Camp love to look at me and judge me. That's hard and confusing, 'cause I don't know whether to fight or just let them talk trash. So I think the people in Camp are complicating my life.

-John Doe Juggalo

From The Beat: It's a burden, the way people at Camp run around hurtin' each other every chance they get. It only increases the stress for all concerned. Then they complain about everyone else when it's their turn to feel the burn. Camp is hard enough without everyone needing to act tough.

Fear of God

What's crackling Beat? This is your homeboy Markie from Hayward, writing on this topic fear.

First of all, I fear no one but God because He is the only reason why I'm living today.

I also fear death because I'm not ready to die. I'm too young and still trying to enjoy life while I can 'cause you never know when that time might come. So don't fear nothing or no one but God. I hope all the homeboys and homegirls change their ways before it's too late. God bless all you people that want to change and be safe. I'm out of this hall, God willing tomorrow when I go to court. Peace out.

-Markie

From The Beat: We hope you got that release and were able to hit the streets with a new attitude and a new way of thinking. We know it sounds kind of silly but you in order to change your ways, you gotta first change your way thinking and seeing. We wish you the best. Let your faith guide you and be more than just a crutch to fall back on when things are going wrong.

This Time Is Different

My life is so complicated because I do ignorant things to get myself into these kinds of predicaments. I feel I am going to do right this time for my beautiful baby girl.

-Lil' Ally-Bo

From The Beat: We are glad this time feels different. We all do things we wish we hadn't. Hopefully you will be able to show your daughter how to live and not just tell her.

Going Home

What's up, Beat? This is Lil' Bee from Oakland. I'm at Camp, and I been here about two months — and I still ain't got a HV (home visit)!

But I go home this weekend, and I'm go' be on one, off hella grapes, and I might not come back. If I do come back, I'm go' be drunk and dirty off hella grapes.

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: This is foolish talk. You're smarter than this. If you don't come back, it's a warrant. If you come back dirty, you lose your next HV. Think before you drink. And don't smoke, no joke. Freedom from the juvenile justice system is you mission!

Probation Complication

Life is complicate since I was place on probation. It's hard knowing whatever you do, you gon' be watched by someone you don't know — plus, knowing that person has more say than your parents!

That hurts, and makes your life difficult and complicated. This is my last week at Camp, and I'm still on probation with conditions — and that is complicated! But no matter what situation you're in, life is complicated. You just got to find a way to make the best out of it.

So, keep yo' head up and listen for me on the radio!

-Brah Dummy

From The Beat: Life is far less complicated if you keep your focus on doing the right thing, and then the next right thing — and never look beyond the task at hand. Just do what's right, take pride in the fact that you did, and whatever the consequences on that particular occasion, if you continue to do what's right, regardless of consequences — after a while, you start getting those good consequences for the good things you're doing. Or, you can get frustrated and quit the first time doing right lets you down or even backfires on you. But then, you're through. Hey, was that you we just heard on the radio?

Union City Police Department

Well, this is yo' boy. Lil' Spooks. coming at y'all from this so-called max' unit, kicking back. Well, I'm'a write on this here topic: Complicated.

Well, what makes my life so complicated is the Union City Police Department and the Alameda County Gang Task Force, because ever since they met me or recognized me, they been tryin'a frame me for lots of stuff. They been raiding my house and making excuses, such as, giving me charges just to get the warrant!

Then, to make it worse, every time they see me, they pull me over and talk hella shhh. But all I do, is just take it and smile, because I know that they can't bring a hood like me down. Alrato.

-Spooks

From The Beat: Those empty, meaningless phrases, like the one with which you end this otherwise informative piece, are self-endangerment because they're straight-up delusional. What you need to do is change your life, on the real, so that they are guaranteed never to have anything on you 'cause you're doing nothing illegal. Then you really can just smile with no sweat and go on about your business. But if you insist on acting like a "hood fella" — you setting yourself up to be a cell dwella. Think about it.

To The Beat

I have put the same poem in four times and I still do not see it in The Beat and I'm mad, because I'm an OG. when it come to The Beat. So I feel disrespected and I think I should get an apology. The name of my poem is "The Love Within."

-Rush

From The Beat: Hmmm. We're not sure what happened to your poem, but we'll be the first to admit that The Beat does not have a perfect system, especially relying on so many volunteers. What we need is good interns who make sure all the pieces get typed. Maybe you could be an intern who helps us with that so someone else's poem isn't left out like yours. We are sorry you feel disrespected.

My First HV

What's up, Beat readers. This Lil' Bee, comin' at you again from Camp. Man, I gotta get home so I can see my son and baby'momma. But when I go home, somethin' always happen! And I'm mad I didn't get to go to Bob' funeral. RIP Bob.

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: You've got to slow your roll, 'cause your role as a father is more important than any of this other noise. Forget about our constant desire to get high — and give being a responsible father your best try!

Think Before You Do

they say the hood
is the place to be
all everyone does
is go dumb and smoke weed
us teenagers all we think about
pulling up on candy paint and some twenty-four's
not thinking people work for that
we think we could get it
standing on a corner — sell dope
we think "easy way to get money" by hitting licks
not thinking we could lose our life
it's from d
think before you do

-D

From The Beat: They say, the broad and easy way is the highway to hell. We don't know about that, but we do know that so-called easy money goes as fast as it comes, plus it will get you locked up or shot down. You can lose your life to the grave or become the system's slave. Really, it's easier to do right, even when it feels like the hardest thing you've ever done in your young life.

Complicated

What's up wit' it, Beat? This is Sasquatch from Hayward. To start off, I want to say what's up to all my loved ones. Now, down to business: My life really ain't complicated, but I ain't livin' it right.

Being locked up is really not complicated either, it's just — things happen to you for a reason. The good thing about this is that I know who my real friends are, and I know my familia still loves me, no matter what. I know if I don't change, I could end up dead or in jail my whole life — but what I told a religious man once, "Cholo asta la muerte." (Gangster for life.)

That's just me. I know I could change, but I don't want to change. I want to be what I want to be. So, I say, "Let me be." Well, Beat, I'm out till next time. Late.

-Sasquatch

From The Beat: Forgive us if we don't like the idea of your ending up dead soon, or in jail for life. Imagine someone you care about standing on the railing of the Golden Gate Bridge about to jump. He tells you, "Hey, that's just me, so let me be." If you love that homie or family member, you're going to try and talk them out of their insanity. It's like they say, "Suicide is a permanent solution to a temporary problem." Well, what you're talking about here is suicidal. And "asta la muerte" means "till death" not "for life" — we say there's a difference. If you can change, prove it, and it would be the greatest gift under the sun for all your homies, 'cause most believe it is not possible to change even if they want to. What we wouldn't give to see you be the living proof! But we're probably wasting time, words and space on the page here. Right?

When I Get Out

When I get out, I'm going to eat Fruity Pebbles and I'm going to smoke a blunt.

-Fred Flintstone

From The Beat: Ha! Nice goals. But remember, drugs are illegal, you are already in jail – is stupidity a crime? Mmm... Fruity Pebbles - the best cereal in the world!

This War

the cops stop you 'cause you black or brown
that's war
run you through the system for yours that's war
when they call my 'hood a drug zone that's war
why they so rich we poor that's war
if you young and black you sell crack that's war
the white house is the rock house that's war
chillin' on the corner we gang that's war
popo do the same damn thing that's war
when they murder my patnah it's war
marching in the street is a strategy of war
soldiers try to link with other soldiers in the war
and gotta know the art of war

-Tonga

From The Beat: The war will not be won by the power of the gun. On the contrary, when the 'hood unites and decides to fight with the weapons of non-violence, the ones with the guns will be rendered silent in the face of such soldiering. Ever heard of Badshah Khan? He put down his gun and won a revolution 'cause of the Gandhi tactics of non-violence he started using. Then if you go to lock up, you're a prisoner of conscience — not just another thug caught up in violence. It's a question of being a threat to your home community or a mighty warrior with moral impunity.

Two Weeks Left

What's up wit' it! How are all you doin' in this place? Well, this is Lil' Mark from Hayward. Well, I'm coo' postin'. Well, as for me, I'm waiting to go to court on the twenty-fourth and get released. Ya feel! Get back and get wit' some females, hahaha, and drink some beer and Henney and smoke purp and a box of Newports and chill with my family. But when you get this wila (letter), I'll probably have two weeks left. But I'm out, alrato.

-Lil' Mark

From The Beat: Every week you get closer to freedom, you move closer to guaranteeing you'll be back on lock up, if you don't get yourself killed first — just like an addict returning to his dope, you're ready for that life of crime that will have you dead or doing time so fast you won't even believe you had a chance (and threw it away!).

My life really ain't complicated, but I ain't livin' it right.

Hood Talk

What's cracking, Beat? This is that hood, Lil' Juanito, comin' at y'all one time man. I'm over here maintaining, doing my thug things wit' my love' ones. I really don't feel like writing much, but I would like to extend my love and respect to all that are keepin' it real while they're down and doin' time. One love.

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: It's so sad that all this time has passed, and you stay stuck behind this "hood fella" mask. We know you were born into it, but that doesn't mean you have to volunteer to be its victim. What you call "keep it real", just keeps you in the system.

Why?

Why did the hurricane have to hit my hometown? If that wouldn't have happened, I would not have gotten locked up!

My life got messed up. When I was in New Orleans, I never did nothing that I'm supposed to do. (Let me tell it, ha ha!) I used to go to school and still get me…. Everything has changed in my life, but I could deal with it! Ya heard me? It ain't nothing to a boss.

I try to maintain and keep my head up, which I always have did. Why did I have to have that gun on that day? My life changed ever since I came to the Bay (lightweight).

-Young Chase

From The Beat: Whenever you're asking why "on that day" — it's the wrong question. If you carry a gun, then it's sure to happen one day — if not that day, then the next. For sure, one day you get caught. So, the question is: Why do you live a life that has you convinced that carrying a gun is necessary if not right? The time has come for you to rise from the street, finish school and get that j-o-b — no more playing it both ways. 'Cause you pay the price for a life of crime when that day finally comes, whether you're here by the Bay or back in the City of New Orleans.

Self Control

Get a grip, will ya? Or in other words, keep control over yourself — like Christians and non-Christians alike are watching to see how you react to the situation of life. Your choice to stand strong in your faith, to resist temptation, or to respond in love, will be an encouragement to others. However, a thoughtless word or action can destroy the testimony you're trying to maintain. Who do you really want to be? Much of the answer to that question comes down to self-control.

-Allen

From The Beat: Primarily you need to educate your heart to be as much like the heart of Jesus as is humanly possible, which is to say, practice love and truth as the heart's own innermost desire — love for all God's children is God's truth. If your heart is still too confused by pain, fear or hate, to find Jesus within it — fake it till you make it! Self-control, in other words, is a temporary strategy as you continue to teach your heart to feel God's love and act on it!

Go Round And Round

sometimes i fall
and i be going round
i said i be round y'all
round with the world y'all
and i get dizzyv
i said i be getting dizzy
and i get off track
and i be callin' y'all
but y'all don't answer
where y'all at
where my ninjas is at
i'm callin' y'all
answer me back
like y'all be answering the wax
where my ninjas is at
someone thinking where is the 'mac
don't want no one to hit me in the back
'cause mafia just trying to get back
with mo' love or no love
that is that

-Choyce

From The Beat: It's hard to pull your mind up off the street, when previous acts have you thinking that you might meet your death by someone stopping your breath with a bullet in your chest — or your back! It seems like you have to carry a 'mac yourself, but that will prove itself to be hazardous to your health. What you need to do, is move yourself up off the street into a job, make your money legally and forget about the mob. You'll be shocked in time to see that the mob no longer has you in mind either when you stop posting up and take a breather from the street.

Next Time

The first thang I'm do when I get a release in six months is go get some real food from the outs 'cause this food don't be all that good. Sometimes I don't like eating this food and I don't like taking showers with other ninjas, it just don't feel right, on the real. I can't see how people be up in here for years. I can't do it.

Once I get out I'm be slick wit' my stuff, 'cause the next time I do a felony it's for five years.

-Arturo

From The Beat: Well if you really think that being slick is what is going to keep you out of jail, you are sorely mistaken. Everybody's luck runs out… everybody's. You know what the consequences are (5 years); you know what this place is like (group showers and bad food) so why even risk it? Is it really worth it?

Beezies At the Beach

let me tell ya 'bout girls at the beach
first of all let me start off by saying
the beat 'bout hella bootsie
they always changin' yo' words and shhh
girls at the beach 'bout hella sexy
with them itty-bitty bikinis on
water drippin' wet down they leg
got me thinking 'bout sexy girls
but anyway i love going
to the beach wit' some beezies
i like these girls that have a good sense of humor
like to play and not hard to get close to
because that's all it's 'bout
gettin' close to dat girl you feel me

-Baby Boi

From The Beat: We spend our time typing and printing your pieces. We not only give you the paper and pencil, but you've walked away with pads of paper for letters and/or schoolwork. And we write back to you every week. And we're bootsie, 'cause we won't print every petty little scandalous word you write, when you should know it is disrespectful to our readership? Oh well.

Talk About Love

everybody talk about love
but most of the "love" they're discussing
fall far short of the real thing
— god's love for this children
god loves with a love beyond human
comprehension
he know everything about you —
your needs, your desires, and your dreams —
and wants the best for you
that's why he sent his only son jesus
to die on a cross for your sins
through good times and bad
god will be with you
loving you more then you could ever imagine

-Allen

From The Beat: Yes, yes! But Jesus death is a revelation not only of divine love but of human evil. So if you are truly a believer, you'll separate yourself from those who would kill — hurt, maim, steal or do all kinds of ill — Jesus died for your sins, so in you revelation (and change!) can begin!

A Turning Point

If I had a do over in life I would go back to a day when I was a young teen. My thirteenth birthday was not good for me. But it seems like ever since I turned thirteen, everything has gone wrong for me. I would have been a good kid, had fun and would of went to school. I would of done the right thing in life and done good.

-Demetris

From The Beat: So you have made some mistakes? Your life isn't over and you are still very young. Everything that you wish could have done you can do right now. Don't waste any more time wishing things were different. Make it happen now.

The Street Life

I can't lie, I love the street life, money, clothes, cars, fame and guns, I love it all. I love money the most but you can't have money with out the protect so that's were the guns come in. The sound of gun shots make me happy, I don't know why. I like to function off a pill, banging my turf, this makes me feel untouchable.

Even though I'm a female I go hard. How fake ninjas be tryin' to act hard in the Hall, but when I see them on the outs it's gon' be a different story.

Man, I love looking good, people jealous of me wanting to be me. All they can do is respect it, cause they ain't gon' check it. I hate people telling me what to do cause I'm a boss.

But when I look back at all these thing that's what got me in here. I love my life and refuse to keep living the street life so to all who was like me, wake up get it together cause when you in jail we aint got nothing but each other. Bless everyone and good luck.

-Aleshia

From The Beat: Aleshia, the first part of this piece is just talk – and you know it. You are getting ready to suffer the consequnces of this "Street Life". Do you love the streets more than you love your own life? Cause it seems that you are trading your life for it. Look where this lifestyle has brought you. What have you got now? Looking back on your life is a great place to start, but look forward at your life…where are you taking it? Aleshia, leave behind the street life or you will regret it. Keep your head up – and make sure you are looking in the right direction.

That One Day

That one day, on July 25th, 2006, I got released. I was so happy, I almost did a back flip in the courtroom.

-Lil' Shorty

From The Beat: Welcome back! Perhaps you will have another great day like that one. What about the day you were arrested?

Complicated

Damn! Here I am on probation, can't go no where, stuck in placements and so forth.

Aww... some grapes to calm me down and help me escape the feelings I have about my situation. Everywhere I go, I gotta smoke with or without someone. But the thing is I get randomly pee tested, what the hell am I gonna do? I don't wanna fail the test, but I wanna get high. Im-a have to for rehab.

I can't afford to lose anymore months of my life 'cause I wanted to get high. I would be dumb if I didn't get help.

-Makayla

From The Beat: Yup. It feels complicated, but you know what you have to do – and you know the consequences of your actions. Now all you've got to do is make a decision.

Been Thinking

i've been contemplating a lot lately
and all that keeps comin' up in my head
is i want these ninjas dead
i want to be all myself
without nobody trying to take my health
these fake faces just make me mad
i feel as though i have no heart no soul
sometimes i feel that where my heart is
there's nothing but a hole
i want to be out
i feel like my life is one big drought
i'm still waiting for something to drink
i've been getting real thirsty lately
waitin' to touch down and get down

-Sax

From The Beat: Your head is still playing tricks on you. Maybe this is how you used to do, but it's what has you locked down in max. It's not just whatever the charge is this time or whoever did or didn't drop a dime. It's time to face the facts, your head will have you dead or locked up for life if you don't find your soul soon and get your heart right.

Courage

Courage isn't skiing down the vertical face of a mountain, one step ahead of an advancing avalanche. (Crazy, maybe.) Courage is doing the right thing, even when "the right thing" scares you. You'll have to make many decisions in life. Resolve today that, with God's help, you will have the courage to make the right choices-every time.

-Allen

From The Beat: It's a good thing to want to share uplifting thoughts with our downtrodden Beat readership. Courage to do the right thing, deserves recognition and support. However, we did find these same words on a couple of internet "personal pages." The Beat is for your words, drawn from your own personal life experience, addressed to your peers in The Beat.

Through Life

Your thought life is the most private part of you — who are you, really? It is possible to hide these innermost thoughts from others, but God sees all of them, good or bad. If you struggle with impure thoughts, God is able to clean your mind. Confess your sin and replace those bad thoughts with God's word. It may take time and effort, but you'll find it's well worth the investment.

-Allen

From The Beat: Again, sage words of wisdom, especially if we substitute an attribute of God for the theocentric vocabulary of any one or another spiritual tradition — say, truth, or, love. Indeed when the spirit of truth and love are one, isn't that God's living will?

Stay Up

yaddameen
man it the boy cheeda b
get money make money all day
this gettin' locked up
shhh ain't cool at all
we got to stay out
and get it how we live man
so y'all stay up
get money yaddameen
yeah yeah yeah

-Cheeda B

From The Beat: Got to change how you live, see? Got to change how you get money, if you want to stay free! Yaddameen? Keep grinding on the block, keep getting locked up. Keep hitting house licks, come back to lock so quick you'll head will spin. What maybe worked yesterday for a min', will never work for long again. If you're all about your cheese, gotta change. Yaddameez?

At Camp

What's up, Beat! How y'all doin'? Hopefully all that are locked up maintain, and gain wisdom. Now for some real talk. First off, this Lil' Marquitos from Hayward, flossin' my respect to all those in the torcida.

Keepin' my head up before my chin hit my chest! I'm up here at Camp doin' my six-month program, and so far there's been some up's and down's — but I ain't letting the petty stuff get to me! I hope that all of those incarcerated stay up and remain strong.

-Lil' Marquitos

From The Beat: To remain strong, does not mean unchanging. Really, there was a weakness in your thinking that got you here, a flaw, an error that needs to be corrected, not for anyone else but yourself. The same goes for Juanito, (which we cut out) but it's up to each one to seek his own individual vision of the truth — 'cause wisdom never comes by the platoon system. You feel?

Faith

"Ya gotta have faith", many say. The question is: Faith in what? Make sure you put your faith into something (actually, someone) worthy. In a word, God. In a world of uncertainty, faith sometimes seems out of reach. But remember this — God exists and he never changes. We can put our complete faith in him, and he will never fail us.

-Allen

From The Beat: God's love is unceasing, never changes, but revelations of that love in our hearts allow our conception of divine love to change continuously, deepen in our understanding as it lives in our hearts, at once consoling and strengthening us, healing and urging us to act in this God-incarnate world where Jesus lived and died and lives again through those who (regardless of race, color or creed) in service to the hungry, the sick, the prisoner, the poor — show love (and respect).

What Will Happen To Me?

One thing I fear in life is messing up, going to prison and doing like four or five years. Another thing I fear is dying and going to hell and not heaven.

-Demetris

From The Beat: Some things we have control over and some we don't. You have total control over whether or not you go to jail for four or five years. As for going to heaven, you don't necessarily have control over this – live your life as best you can and things will work out.

How My Life Got Complicated

I had come here and my life feels complicated 'cause I don't know if it's going to be the same when I get out and I might have to go to court every week.

If I have to be on house arrest, I would want to be released with nothing that I have to do like check in with my probation officer every damn month or have a piss test 'cause I don't do no drugs and I get money the legal way. If my parents didn't care the way they do, I would in the streets somewhere laid out, dead. I don't like drugs. They bring money in.

-Justin

From The Beat: Maybe you don't do drugs, but you are definitly suffering some of the consequences that come with drug abuse. You need others to run your life because you couldn't do it yourself. Accept your consequences and move on. Life gets more and more complicated. The trick is to learn how to cope with your situation and learn from your mistakes.

My Life Got Complicated

My life got complicated when I started selling drugs and I started at a young age, so I've been doin' it for years, but it's hard to stop.

You be used to the money comin' so fast. Then, when you do stop, you don't get as much money as you used to get, so you start back because you want money and it's easy that way and you're able to get what you want, so you like gettin' the money that way, but when you do it like that, you have to stop sooner or later because you can't sell drugs for life. They end you up either in jail or dead. But I need to stop sooner or later because after a while, the police starts to know you and your name. Then, they start messin' with you, so you get tired of them doin' that, but selling drugs is hard to walk away from, but some people do it 'cause they can't get no job, but you can't do it for the rest of your life.

-Roland

From The Beat: Roland, you better stop sooner than later, or later may come and you'll have no options. Be smart – and decide soon. Regret comes strong.

Getting Money

Sometimes it's hard to walk away from your surrounding blocks.

Like where I'm from, it's a lot of drug-related streets like everywhere. It's just around me and the money comes, so you just see everybody getting money. Why I ain't? Not that I care what everybody does. Like you could just be standing on the corner and a dope fiend, a drug addict, just come up to you and be like, "You got something" and just keep coming.

You think to yo'self, like if I had $50 to a $100 dollars, in 10 to 20 minutes, but the only problems is, you got to look over your shoulder all the time, so it really ain't worth it. But to some people, it is. It's just a way of life. Some people didn't go to school and it was they only option.

-Antwoine

From The Beat: You make a really good point. Don't be one of these people that have no other options. These people are the ones that are filling our prisons.

To My Cousin Mainy

This right here goes out to my cousin Dc.
Today I found out that my ninja got four years in
California Youth Authority.
My bra was tryin' hella hard to do a good program but the
system worked my ninja.
I want to tell him to stay solid and keep his head up!
It will be over in no time.
Don't trip bra 'cause in no time we'll be together kickin'
it on the couch
like boss's supposed to be.
I'ma pray for you ninja.
Good luck, keep your chin up. See you in a minute bra!

-Kidd

From The Beat: That's rough – CYA is no joke and we know that your cousin is not happy about losing four years of his life to that place. It will be hard and we wish him the best. Learn from his mistakes without following in his footsteps, because you may think the system played him, but in truth, lets keep it real, he played himself!

Finally At Camp

Man, let me start by introducing myself. This Soldier from Hayward. I'm now writin' from Camp. They finally came and picked me up last Wednesday!

I didn't think they were ever gonna come through and swoop me, but they did. I was in max on the phone with my homie in the outs when Mrs. Amoza came in and said, "Hang up the phone up." — and I was gone!

Now my release date is at the end of January. That's if I do a straight program. Hopefully, I do! If not, I probably won't get released until February or March.

Well anyway, I was hella happy when I hit Camp, 'cause my sister was now able to come see me. So my granny brought her up here to see me! She brought me McDonalds and a big ol' burrito, too — man, that was good! I haven't had that in a coo' min'!

Well, I'm out now. I just wanted to let you know I touched down at Camp. One love. Stay up, to all locked up — and to the ones doin' it big on the outs.

-Lil' Soldier

From The Beat: Man, we can just feel the joy of that visit with your sister and your granny, biting into that burrito and all from McDonalds! Now the thing is to realize just how much the freedom to be home with family, means to you. Forget about "doing it big" on the outs, unless by that you mean — working toward your high school degree and maybe getting some kind of j-o-b. 'Cause that's what it will take to keep you home with family — foreveraftering! Now think about what it really means to do your thing.

Mom

You hold me up when I'm low
You tell me which where to go
I love you more and more each day
Sorry for the grief and stress
I hope you know
You are the best.

-Regina

From The Beat: I hope she knows that what you say you truly feel and that someday you too will be able to think back to this poem and, thinking of your own child, know that they feel like this toward you.

Pen-Less

My life got so complicated when I got caught tagging.

-Young Ace

From The Beat: Well, you've got a decision to make. What's more important to you, than your freedom?

Restricted From Home

I got sent to Camp Sweeney for six-to-nine months. I'm doing a good program, with only one write up.

I got my home pass, and it was great! I come back, and they don't drug test me. So my next home pass, I smoke weed — and I was high as possible. As soon as I come back this time, they drug test me! And now, I'm restricted to Camp until I test clean.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: Really, this is why it's important to stay clean because you want to, 'cause then you would have come back and it would still be coo' — you'd be going home next weekend instead of feeling like you got played for a fool. Still, thanks for the news to those heading for Camp — use and (sooner or later) you'll lose. Don't trip though, and on your next HV, you already know.

Game Bang Life

It used to be me and my brother in the game. I got locked up and they killed my brother. Now all I wanna do is go back to that ninja who killed my brother. But at the same time I don't, because I got a little boy on the way so I'm gonna try to stop that game mess. I'm never gonna forget my brother Skipp, RIP. You will always be on my mind. That's all I got to say for today

-Chakal

From The Beat: First and foremost, we are sorry to hear about your brother. It can't be easy to lose someone who you grew up with, spent so much time with and shared blood with. But wake up! You have a son on the way. You are in jail. Your brother is gone forever. Is going and killing the fool who caused you so much pain going to change anything? Will make it your brother come back? Will it make you a better father? NO. Don't trick yourself into believing that murder is about honor and respect. It's selfish and cold. Live the life that your brother didn't get the chance to – say goodbye to the game's b-s.

Last Beat

This is my last Beat session because I go to go to court on Friday and hopefully I will get released because I'm 18. The judge gave me 30 days last month. Truthfully I thought I was going to Santa Rita but my attorney said he was going to get me out on a straight release. My boss wants me to still work for him. Plus I've been working on my GED in Hayward.

To all stay up and keep your head right.

-Lil' Ally-Bo

From The Beat: You are very lucky to have a job waiting for you. You are smart to be working towards getting your education. If you get released, do not let these good things go to waste.

Somebody Special

Somebody special is what the Prince need to keep him off the street. But, she ask me to stay in the house. I say, ninja please!

Come to find out that's what the solid ninjas need. All I want is my girl and a whole lotta cheese. She's the solidest out there. She don't trip off other broads and what you do, long as you safe. She don't care, the most thing she loves is playing in her man's hair cause it's long and only get longer. To be continued.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: So her loyalty and understanding makes her special? What makes you her, "Special Somebody"? Don't forget relationships need commitment from both sides, otherwise a good thing won't last long.

Why I'm Mad

What up Beat Within. This is Kazer and I want to talk about these group home rules trying to make me cut my hair. But I don't get it. What's the point cutting your hair if you're already in there doing your time?

I already got interviewed to two group homes. I did not want to go there, then my PO said that two more didn't want to accept me. Then I got interviews with a group home named Thunder Road. She's a pretty lady and pretty nice, I thought she was trying to work with me. Then she left and then I waited for a week, and two days later she never came. That made me pretty sad, and that's why I'm mad.

-Kazer

From The Beat: Sorry to hear about Thunder Road... we hope you find a good placement. As for the hair, it's all about following group home rules, even if you hate them so you can get out as soon as possible. You're hair will grow back, and the more you stay cool, the quicker you can get out and wear your hair – and your life – the way you want to.

Free Weed

what it do be
i am about to leave this baby penitentiary
and blow hella weed
all day
forget the staff
because they did not teach me nothin' at all
the only thing they did was make me go dumb out on the block
so all my ninjas that's locked up
pimp yo' time and cut

-Lil' TuTu

From The Beat: This attitude passes for wisdom, until you get caught up again. Don't just "pimp" your time, or you'll get pimped when you go back to the grind — stuck in the revolving door of the juvenile justice system. Liberate yourself from the cycle of going dumb on the block, then caught up and locked up. Let your mind see clear — rise above the street and stay out of here!

Out

How would you feel if you're in and your ninjas are out? Clueless. My ninjas out and I'm in. I'm locked up and he's not. I don't feel like I should be in here. I'm here locked in the system and can't get out. First it was all him being in and out of juvie. Trust me you don't want to live like this. It's a shame my boyfriend has more sense than me not to be getting in trouble like this. I love him and I would do whatever to stay out. This is not the life for a girl.

-Arabian Goddess

From The Beat: If you can't trust him because he's on the outs and you're in, then you can't trust him period girl!

Drug Abuse

What's up, Beat? This is Raskal from Hayward. I'm here to talk about drug abuse. Where I'm from, I see a lot of dope fiends or addicts. They will do anything to get it. I'm talking about some shady shhh.

Someone I know sells heroin. So, please try to keep this shhh of the street.

Well, all right Beat, see you next week. Al rato (I'll holla at y'all later).

-Raskal

From The Beat: Raskal, how can we as a community help to stop drug abuse and sales in our communities? Any ideas?

When I Felt Powerless

The time I felt powerless was when my cousin passed away. I felt powerless 'cause I really didn't know him really well but I really did want to know him but I can't cause he ain't here anymore so I would like to say rest in peace Swoorl. I still love him even though I didn't know him well.

-Abo

From The Beat: Life is so precious. Get to kow your family and make them proud of you. Get off the streets that are taking way too many young people.

Joy

To me, it's like everyone's looking for happiness these days from money, possessions, sex, you name it. But any pleasure that those things bring is short-lived. True joy, however, is the deep-down, long-lasting satisfaction of a right relationship with God, the source of all good things. You can experience His gift of joy today and everyday. Just don't keep it to yourself — be sure to spread it to others around you. They're probably looking for some!

-Allen

From The Beat: Remember though that Jesus warned how many will speak in his name and he will not recognize them. It is not in preaching God's name but in showing God's love that the grace of his joy is given and received, and not just in spirit. When John the Baptist was asked, "What is justice?" He said, "If you have two coats, give one to the poor." Now that's a "correctional system".

If I Weren't Here

My life is not that complicated because I'm up in here so much. If I was up in the streets right now, I'd probably be dead or in jail, the real jail.

-S

From The Beat: So many young people who have written for The Beat have said this, that as much as they hate Juvy, at least it keeps them safer. What do you think could be done – both by you and by the city – to make those streets safer. No one should have to walk in fear.

You Are The Love of My Life

You show me you love me by your commitment to me. Your actions speak the truth and they agree with the words you say to me. Your expressions tell me your feelings. You're the person who shares my purpose in life.

In our private world we talk about things no one else will ever hear.

Things are not always perfect between us, but we know that our love will always be the same and we always find ways to work things out, and that makes our love grow stronger over time. It's not a place we just came to and left it and it's going to go out of style we just don't feel it just for today or tomorrow, our love means forever. It's not just our present and future, it's our destiny to be together. And that's why you are the love of my life.

Sometimes it's not enough just to have you in my life, you know there are times when I need more of you than you give more attention more understanding. Maybe even a little more of your time. I understand that I don't want to crowd you or ask too much. I guess that I just want you to open up a little more, share some of your feelings with me but most of all you can trust me with your love . Know that and the more of you that you give, the more of me I'll give.

-Baby Lou

From The Beat: This is a good piece, not just as a letter to your girl, but as something for us all to think about when we think about how hard and good it is to have someone you love. Hard because there are always troubles, but good because really, our ability to love is the greatest gift. Thanks for putting down your thoughts on it... now live up to the promises you make your girl!

Tired

What's up Beat this yo' boy, Lil' Spooks, coming at y'all from this so-called max' unit. Well, I'm writing about how I'm tired of all these j-cats up in here getting in trouble and sent back to their rooms and then start kickin' and yelling under their room doors.

That bull gets me mad, because they end up messing it up for everybody else. Man, ninjas need to be able to handle their time like men, not kickin' and whining just to get attention. Like the song goes, "If you can't do the time, don't do the crime". And to all in here: Keep it solid. Alrato!

-Lil' Spooks

From The Beat: We agree that folks all locked up together in a limited space, need to be more respectful of each other. Wherever you're from, or whatever your race, everyone in here is doing time together. So why not pull together and make it better for everyone else and also yourself. As they said in the American Revolution: "We must all hang together, or we'll hang separately."

I Like the Beach

....because I like to see females in their bikinis and just have picnics with family and friends and sometimes go swimming if its that hot. I don't got no favorite beach. The best time I like to go is the beach is when summer hits.

-S

From the Beat: Have you ever been to the beach down south, where the water is warm enough to swim in almost all summer long? There's something to hold on to, when you're imagining a better life for yourself – or even better, the warm beaches of Hawaii, one of the best reasons to stay out of jail!

Living Without Money

I'm not saying my life is complicated, but there is issues in my life right now that are.

Money is one. It's hard to live without money. Money makes the world go round. My mom doesn't give me as much money as I want, so I go out there and get it the best way I can, whether it's from girls or from taking it from somebody. See that's complicated 'cause I can end up dead or in jail and I don't wanna be lock ed up or dead.

Other than that it's not really complicated, I just gotta survive and focus on what life is really about. And I want everything life has to offer.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Get your money from girls???? Come on Anthony! Earn your cash in a manner that doesn't disrespect girls or yourself! Now you know money isn't what makes the world go 'round. Freedom is what makes the world go 'round – since without freedom, money is useless. Imagine yourself locked up in a cell with hundreds of thousands of dollars and no way to get them to somebody... see? All the money in the world can't get you what you most truly want... which is to stay out of jail! Have a better vision as to how you want to earn your money legitly!

Rules of Engagement

Young ninja on the block, maintaining with this hard white

Smoke weed, drink drank, pop pills just to enjoy myself.

Life is hard. Not only do you got to watch for the police and your enemy and your females but you gotta watch the ninjas you mess with. Ninjas smile in your face, call you bra' and be plottin' on you on the under. What makes you my friend? When I was broke, you'd act like you don't know me, when I'm eatin, then you know me?

It's good though

-Lil' E

From The Beat: It's not good though, is it. As you point out, it's a life where you're always in danger, where you can't trust, where the worst sides of people come out. You deserve better, don't you? We think so.

The Beach

I used to go to the beach with friends and family to get away from a lot of stuff. I don't really want to deal with. I never went in too far, because I was always worried about the sharks, and I can't swim too good. I would just go to kick it and talk to a few girls, drink a little, smoke a little bit.

When I finish camp I should go on a regular basis, because it keeps me out of trouble and I still have fun. It's just gonna be hard to stay out because I'm on probation til I'm twenty-two. I'm gonna get a job and go to Great American and Six Flags too.

-Anthony

From The Beat: The ocean is the opposite of lockdown isn't it? The sun, the feel of wind on your face, the freedom, and that water stretching out as far as the eye can see. You know here's a thought – if you like the beach so much, why not try to get a job out there? That way you can make money and also be out by the water?

Hate

I hate it
'Cause I never made it.
Always broke, no money
I neva found a ninja disrespectin' me funny
hella mad livin' bummy grime and crummy
but we still went dummy
hate it and man, can't fake it.
Been ready to get out back to 'hood
Where chickens cluck
and loud mouth youngstas getting' plucked.

-Wheatbread

From The Beat: Too many "loudmouthed youngstas getting' plucked". This is some great rhyming, just ten lines... next time give us twenty or thirty or more...we want more of your voice in here

Waiting

What's up, this is Chaka from Hayward, just here in juvy waiting for court, so they can give me my sentence. My probation officer is recommending CYA so I don't know but I just have to be strong in the end.

-Chaka

From The Beat: Our fingers are crossed for you Chaka. Keep us posted.

One Bad Decision

My life became complicated by making one bad decision now I am caught up in the system, and now I can't get off Juvenile Hall, I wish I can go home and be with all my girls, but I can't cause of a few mistakes I've made .

Now my life is in the hands of another man! So all I could do is hope for the best.

-Lil' Mel

From The Beat: Yes your life is (temporarily) in the hands of another. But it won't last, soon you'll be out and free to make or not make the same mistakes. Tell us more about that bad decision, and what a good decision would have been.

RIP Wax

What's up Beat? This is yo' boy Tuttie saying RIP Wax. He was somebody I looked up to and every time he was on the block he was doing something bad but he would tell me not to do what he was doing and he would tell me that we was going to make it off the streets and he use to take care of me and give me money and buy me games and stuff like that so that's why I say RIP Wax to this day, because I still got love for him. It's yo' boy young Tuttie saying RIP to all the big homies.

-Lil' Tuttie

From The Beat: You deliver yet another RIP from a big homie who told you to stay away from the lifestyle, yet it appears you have still fallen into the traps. What will it take for you to change your life for the better? Why should a young homie listen to you, when you have been so stubborn yourself?

Next Step

Damn, man, hella mad, went to court and got my group home release and they talking about they 'bout to come get me in two weeks and two weeks passed and they still ain't here.

Well anyways, keep yo' head up. I hope I'll be gone before this piece comes out all right then I'll holla at y'all on the outs when I get released from my group home

-Mien

From The Beat: We wish you the best in your placement and when it is time to go home. We hope no temptation pulls you back to living a life on the edge and a life in the criminal justice system. Take control of your life! If you can do that, then you won't have to worry about the system making decisions for you.

My Fault

Complicated-my life complicated when I came to jail I stole my grandpa's credit card I am to blame for the crime when I get out. I'm gunna start a new life.

Power outage-I lost power when I got arrested I lost trust most of all I lost my girlfriend and family's trust

The beach when I think of the beach I think of calmness.

-Devon

From The Beat: Well Devon, you have the power to make your life better, by first making better choices. You need to show that you are a carrying and thoughtful person, and not a selfish person who even victimizes his own family. What's your plan upon getting out?

Complicated Due To Poor Decisions

My life got complicated by Robby and following what some ninja told me to do that got me locked up in juvenile hall.

The ninja named Petty Tonie told me that I should not get with him but I did get with him and this is where I am for doing that and getting taken out of my house. I'm going to miss my sister and brother and my dad and mother and auntie and my church family. And my ninja have another baby mama and I had a fight with that girl over some stupid stuff that we should not be doing at a young age. We are both very young teenagers.

--Baby girl

From The Beat: Thirteen is certainly a young age, you got that right. You also learned a lesson the hard way about listening to fools who don't care about you and getting yourself locked up for it. Next time, ask yourself what your family who you miss and who miss you would want you to do. Just ask yourself that next time you're about to do something stupid that could get you locked up.

Dedicated To The One And Only

I'm feeling kinda down
No one is around
To tell me it's okay
'Cause tomorrow's a better day
I hella miss you Juan
No matter what in my heart you'll always be my number one!
I miss your sweet touch
O' how I love you so much!
Juanito Y margarita is what it'll always be.

-Margarita

From The Beat: It's no surprise that you're feeling kinda down. You are in jail after all! We hope thinking of Juan helps you get through this and we really hope he will be there for you when you get out, and that he is a positive force in your life who encourages you to do the right thing.

I Just Don't Know

I'm a summer baby so of course I love the beach. It's been dummy times that I've went to the beach and did nothing but smoke and look out.

I'd collect them dollar things (sand dollars).... Write poems and so much more.

It might be nasty to those ninjas reading and alright to my girls but peep game the beach is a cool place to do things explicit like: having the best intercourse that you've every experienced, and whoop- whoop-whoop...

Well I've been off subject for a cool minute reading my Beat but I'm back on....Well umm...ya'll dudes be having the most slow pieces things to say like: "what's up this ya' boi from this and I'm at camp from whoop- whoop"... no one care's that you are from Fairfield or wherever. Or how about: "I miss my girl lovin' and huggin' and whispering in her ear"... who cares!!! Sorry boo but please stay on topic we really don't care we want to hear about real things you know, not b-s!!! That's just so irritating and I had to point it out. Call it hating or whatever but I bet majority feel me... Ya dig... who's with me me... Holla...

-Juicy Ma

From The Beat: It's good to get it out, whatever it is... Keep writing and you'll find your narrative, your story.

The Beach

I love the beach... it makes me feel a sense of peace. It's relaxing to sit by the waves and listen to them crashing into each other. I love going on a hot summer day with my girls. Just tanning and feeling the sunbeam on my skin, feeling the sand between my toes.

For me the beach is a place of relaxation and a place I can gather my thoughts. I use the beach as a place for me to calm down, if I'm mad or had a bad day, the beach can sooth my mind!

-Goldie

From The Beat: The beach is universally accepted as one of the most relaxing places to be. If you weren't out there getting in trouble, you could have been kicking it on the beach this summer. And if you can manage to stay out of trouble once you get out, maybe you can make the dream of a South Pacific island a reality!

What It Do Beat?

This ya girl Portia a.ka. Tu peezee. I'm hella happy my p.o. told me I'm leaving on Thursday after court. It feels so good to know I'm leaving after 4 months here. Anyway here are two poems:

One Day
One day I will be free
So I can do me
And live my life everyday
Without so much structure
But it must be my mind that's been punctured
And filled with confusion
From the trifling illusion
I see on T.V. and in magazines
That's got me wanting to be catered to in a limousine
But those things cause nothing but strife
Believe me I know
'Cause when you got and they don't
That's when the haters hate their hardest
And as far as gossipers they make up what they don't know

-Portia

From The Beat: Portia, We all feel this way sometimes, like we're too wrapped up in the complexities of this world and people are all just hating all the time. And no one else can ever free you from these feelings because they don't feel your pain or live in your head. It's up to you to free yourself regardless of how other people might be affecting you because there will always be outside influences out of your control that we all need to rise above.

Someone Special

There's someone special in my life
Who doesn't know I care
I wish I could let him know it
But let it show, I wouldn't dare

I don't want to even risk it
I don't want to even try
For if he knew I felt this way
I'd feel insecure and shy

I never thought I'd feel this way
I never thought I'd care
There's something in that smile of his
That makes me stop and stare

How can I tell if he likes me?
Will he ever look my way?
I'll keep my feeling hidden for now
And save them for another day.

-Precious Love

From The Beat: This certainly brings us back to adolescent days of longing. Whether or not it works out, we're sure you'll find someone who will really love and recognize you when the time is right. In the meantime, enjoy the crushes and the not knowing. It's part of what makes being young fun!

I'm Out

What it do Beat? How you been? As for me, I just got transferred from max because your boy beat his case that could have gotten him 25. So I'm not stressing anymore, feel me? I should be leaving this week.

I'm going to LA and doin' 9-12 months at a program. It's going to be cool. They are going to help me get a California ID and work permit. This is going to be my last piece so I hope by the time this hits the editor I will be in my own clothes, eatin' real food. But tell them I'm out.

-Call me Lucky

From The Beat; Well it sounds like you have had a lot on your mind so getting released into a program in LA has got to feel real, real good. Once the bad stuff is over, it's easy to forget – forget all the things we were going to do differently if we got a second chance; forget all the people we were going to do right by; forget all the things we were going to let go of. Don't forget what brought you here. Don't make the same mistakes and ask the same questions all over again, like "How did this happen?" You sound serious about your program so take it seriously and do the best you can.

Don't Have No Freedom

Life is complicated because I am up in here, and I don't have no freedom because I am locked up like an animal, and that gets me so mad because I see the same people every day and every night, and eat the same nasty food every day that's why life is complicated because you can't see your family every day.

The only people you see every day is the staff a dn the people you pick up for court.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: Aaah, but Lil' Sam, you do have your mental freedom, right? That's something no can take away from you (unless you offer it to them). Now make yourself proud and get to work on bettering your life so you don't come back to such a place ever again.

Untitled

My beach is going to all the famous spots in the city even though I still have to watch my back. I like going to the pier, the fat houses by the beach, you know, all the good places in the city. People from all over the world would like to see San Francisco and I live in San Francisco so why not see all places that other people pay so much money to come see?

-Lil' Carl B2

From The Beat: Good question, Carl. What are your favorite tourist places in the city?

In The Streets

In the streets
In the streets what we see
Guns, money, and drugs, that's the shhh
That make thugs open up shop
Where you see fly women and young gangstas
Because every time they do something everyone know
And that's not coo' at all in my eyes
Because everyone's on your line telling you to get right or get left

-Young Clap B5

From The Beat: We had to take a scalpel to this piece and do some major surgery because there were things that we don't allow in these pages (the names of your turf, your spot, your gang, etc.) It was either cutting some of it, or cutting all of it, so can you explain your life without violating our writing rules?

The Beach

One day, three friends, their family and me went to the beach to boogie board. We was all out in the water having a good time when all of a sudden his mom started calling us saying we're going too far, so we try to swim in but it wasn't working. So we try to swim harder and faster but we were going further out, and before we knew it, we was so far into then everybody on land was dots.

Once I noticed I freaked out and got off my boogie board, which was from my chest to my waist and went straight under. I swim back up but when I got back to the top I was so scared that when I did get to my board I was out of breath and fumbled wit' my board. When I finally got back on, my friend was…

(To be continued)

-Young Boog B5

From The Beat: How can you do this to us, leave us in mid-sentence like that? Well, we'll just have to wait for part two. (We had to cut your thoughts about love — "love is god, uncontrollable, unpredictable…" — because you plagiarized it.)

Hard Lessons Of Growing Up

My life became complicated when I start doing things on my own because my mom didn't really do anything for me. She was there for me and she was a good mom, but she just couldn't provide me with that much things because I have a lot of brothers and sister, and my mom was a single parent. She couldn't provide for all of us so that's when I start posting on the block selling drugs. Got my own money and wasn't thinking about nothing but money — no school, no nothing

But in the long run it didn't do nothing for me but got me put in jail, and I regret that. I should have been grateful for my mom try to do for me.

-Dre Doojah B5

From The Beat: One of the things that marks the difference between childhood and adulthood is whether or not you consider the long run. Children don't. In their minds, they are the center of the world and "now" is all that counts. As we mature, we learn that there is a whole world we have to fit into, and that what we do now affects how we live in that world in the future. Your regrets and gratitude to your mother for all she sacrificed for you and your siblings is the proof that you have crossed a line from childhood into adulthood. Some people never get there, so even though you're in this difficult situation now, your chances for a better tomorrow have increased tremendously.

Acting Stupid

It started when I was on the jets on ma way to the house. Then I saw some of the homies in a van in the top alley. Then I hopped in. Then we did it, movin' to the store to get some drank, then went to the cannabis club to get some 'dro. Then next thing you know we was high is kites, and drunk as skunks.

Then we painted the city then ended downtown… then did some fool shhh that I wasn't down wit'. Then we bent a few corners and the police surrounding us with guns out, then put us in the cuffs. Now I'm here facin' some serious charges 'cause them ninjas was acting stupid, an' that's the complicated part 'cause that's the homies, man.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: How is it that "them ninjas" was acting stupid, but you weren't? This sad story shows how boys having fun can spin out of control, especially when they start drinking. (We're not endorsing the smoking either, but we know how drink disrupts the ability to think and reason clearly, so…) If we have any advice at all, A-B, it is that (once you're out of this situation) you think seriously about how much alcohol plays a role in whatever trouble you've gotten yourself into, and if you find it is significant, deal with it.

No Power

Well my life turned so complicated because of me getting in trouble, such as not going to school always into a fight, ending up in jail. If my life end up in jail, it gonna be complicated.

Now I don't have any power outage because I ended up in a jail right now. And I have no power to do anything I want right now. I have to ask when I go to the bathroom.

-Simon B2

From The Beat: Well, exactly, Simon. You have given up the power you had to a bunch of strangers that you have to ask permission to use the bathroom? Does that tell you anything about how you might do things differently when you're on the outs?

B-Boy

My life got complicated so as I smoked my first blunt at the age of eleven. I started smoking more an' more. The more I smoked the more criminal I got. The more criminal I got the higher the crimes I was involved in because the higher the crime the higher the pay. That money stack just keep getting higher until I was sittin' on something fat.

I loved knock ninjas out, kickin' down doors to houses and some mo' shhh. I could say It was the 'dro and the thizzels wit' the drank, but even when I was sober I did it for the hell of it. Come to think of it, that shhh is fun, but that's just me. Peace.

-Brandon B5

From The Beat: There is no "peace" when you (or anyone) thinks it's fun to beat people up, kick down their doors, and do "some mo' shhh." It's interesting to us that when we ask what y'all hate about the cops, the answer we often get back is: "They love to beat up ninjas, knock down doors to houses, take our property, and do some other shhh." So tell us, what's the difference between you and those cops?

My Last Time

I want to go home 'cause I hate being in this place. Someone telling me when to eat, when to sleep. I hate wearing the socks the next man put on his feet. I been in YGC seven times, and at first I felt like it wasn't 'cause of me. But then I think about it, and it is 'cause of the decisions I make on the streets.

If I was smarter and took a second about the shhh I do, I would not be in YCC I probably would be layed up wit' my boo. After I finish writin' this, I got to go back to room and stand on my door and stare into the hall waiting for the next time they tell me I can have a phone call. When I get out this time, I'm not getting locked up at all.

-William B5

From The Beat: You've given all the reasons why nobody should be happy to be locked up. But what you haven't given us is any plan for how you're going to avoid it in the future. If you've been here seven times, we bet you've said, "This is the last time!" more than once. Are we right? So tell us, what will be different this time? Don't just tell us you're not going to get locked up again, tell us how you're going to make sure that happens.

The Beach

I ain't really got nothin' to say 'cause I don't think I really been to a beach, but I imagine it like white sand, hella females in bikinis. I think it's hot as hell out there, just kicked back an' enjoying the weather. I don't know that much so I'm 'bout to let y'all go. I'm out.

-Al-Bundy B5

From The Beat: When you tell us that you've never been to the beach in a city next to the largest ocean in the world (the Pacific), then you've told us a lot! There are so many wonderful things you can do that require no money at all, and one of the most wonderful is the ocean. Remembering our note of caution about drink in your other piece, we really hope you find a way to experience this great pleasure. Go when it's cool, in the evening, and just sit and listen to the sound of the waves that crash along the shore. California has one of the most spectacular shorelines in the world. It's free. Take advantage of it!

Going To Happen

Being a young man in the game you are going to go to Juvenile Hall. You're going to get shot at. I see it all the time, so why go to a group home when after you get out you going back to the block and do the same thing? If you don't go back to doing the same thing you can still get dipped up on and get put on the pavement. On top of that when you in the halls you be hearing groupies ain't right. So when you get there you be like, "This place ain't right. Run away!"

I feel if you do your placement or run away it don't mean nothing 'cause when you go back home everything is going to be the same. Ninjas selling crack rock, stealing money and having a lot of sex. Some people might get out of their group and get a job and start doing good, but ninjas don't like to see ninjas doing good, so a ninja is going to play you. After that what are you going to do go back to the block. Get you some rocks like you never stopped think about that!

-Qbb B2

From The Beat: What is it that you are asking people to think about? What are you thinking about? You admit that some people are able to get out of their group home, get a job and start doing good, so what do they have that you don't? Your question about why go to a group home if you're just going to go back to the block when you get out is a good one. If you're already determined to continue the life that enslaves you to the system (not to mention to the street before you get to the system), then there really isn't much point to any of it. But the one thing it seems to show us is that the ones who get out, go to school, do good — they are the ones who are really thinking. When you run away from something (like your grouper), you're also running towards something (like lock-up). Think about it.

The Beach

My favorite beach spot is a secluded spot called Bakers Beach. Whenever I go there it is always empty except for the few people like me. They don't want to be bothered. You can go take and have a barbeque in total seclusion.

-David B4

From The Beat: We also love Baker Beach because people take their dogs to play and run in the water. What's your favorite time of day to go there?

Complicated

My life started getting complicated when I started doing some bad stuff that got me in here. Now my life started getting complicated 'cause I was supposed to go to summer school and finish it so I can pass but since I ain't finishin' it, I'm flunkin'. Power outage.

-Vanessa GU

From The Beat: Yeah, major power outage. You say your life started getting complicated when you started doing some bad stuff, what make you start to do that bad stuff? Did you not understand the possible consequences, or did you not care? We really hope you don't let this latest fall keep you from going back and finishing school, especially since you're so close. Do what it takes to finish high school, and get your diploma. This time, think about your future, and do it!

Why?

Why did I have to come back just because I wanted to get tack?
Why did I have to rob somebody name Bob?
I didn't have a clue
I felt so low
I didn't want to go to YGC
Because it's called "You Got Caught"
Why is the system pimping us? Why oh why?

-Lil' Shorty GU

From The Beat: The system isn't pimping you, Lil' Shorty. It doesn't need to as long as you are doing it to yourself. When you ask: "Why oh why," you're not keeping it real. You know very well the "why oh why" (and if you don't, then you need a wake up call). You gave the system power to do what it's doing when you robbed somebody. But you still haven't accepted your own responsibility for what brought you here. Until you do, you will just keep returning to places like this or worse. We hope you wake up soon. Being an adult means being responsible. It's time.

Love

Love is a feeling from deep inside
Love is a feeling you cannot hide
Love is a feeling that can make you cry
Make you happy or wanna die
Can you see the love in my eyes
What I feel for you is sent from above
What I feel for you must be love
My love for you will always stay…
I love you
I hope you feel the same way

-April GU

From The Beat: You know, April, we wish you would start to focus on something other than this love you feel for…? (We don't want The Beat to become your personal mailbox for love letters; use an envelop and stamp and drop them in the mailbox yourself…) Why not take the challenge of one of the topics we give you, and see what you can do with it? You have some serious writing skills, but we don't think your putting those skills to the best use in The Beat.

Always A Bad Kid

My whole life I've always been a bad kid. By the time I hit high school, everything became more complicated.

I got introduced to drugs and gangs by high school. Sometimes I think to myself I chose the wrong path, but hey, it's my life now.

There ain't no one person to blame but myself for making my life complicated. Everything I did in the past was because of me. I chose the path that I walked on it, and now it led me to here, juvy. Being here in juvy makes life so much more complicated.

What makes my life feel less complicated is when I remember those three lines from Tupac:

Baby don't cry
You gotta keep yo' head up
Even when the road was hard ya never gave up.

-Franklin B5

From The Beat: We appreciate you taking full responsibility for the choices you've made (good and bad), but we can't agree that you should. Everyone one of us makes choices based on the options presented to us. You cannot choose to write a letter if no one has taught you how to write; you cannot choose to swim if you don't know how. We cannot choose to speak Chinese without asking someone to teach us (and if we don't even know there is such a language, then how can we ask someone to teach us?). It is admirable that you want to believe that everything you've done was because of you and nobody else, but that defies our understanding of human growth and development. Having said all that, though, now it is time to make those choices because now you know so much more than you did as a child. So when you say, "but hey, it's my life now," you are making one of those critical choices not to change but simply to accept. We hope you think more deeply about this topic, because you've got the brainpower to alter the direction of your life. If you choose to.

Reality Check, Part Three

I'm telling you how it is through the Beat Within every week
Murders, drugs, gangs in every city and town its all the same
Ninjas is killing other ninjas to get the fame, cash money is on everybody's mind
Trying to live the fast lane on the block on the grind
Frontline, backstreets, everyone on a mission
I ain't spittin' the same thing so peep game and listen
We ain't just drunk Mexicans or just crazy-ass Latinos
But we stay flamed up from our head to our toes
No dreads but yes we got grills, scrapers, and stunnas
The popos come everybody breaks
Hit the cuts, house, or an alley way
That's how it is when you shake the spot
Then you got to break 'cause the spot is hot
The Bay is the place everybody wants to be
YGC, Alameda, Contra Costa, Hillcrest, dat's da county halls
The rooms stink, the food is shhh and you enclosed with a lock door and four dirty walls
OG's, young G's as pee-wees out to earn stripes
Youngsters on da block posted, standing, sitting, or chilling in a car or on a bike
But if you ain't from around here, don't even stop
Latinos and blacks, Somoans, white and Asians up in here
This one was short 'cause the next one is going to be hit
Reality check part three, now you listening to this kid

-Lil' Shadow B4

From The Beat: We're not going to let you use The Beat to hate on your brother, or hold yourself up as superior to any other. You aren't! You're all in this same sick boat, trying to stay afloat. You're in it together, whatever the weather. You put yourself behind these walls, so don't pretend that you're standing tall. Reality check? That's just what you need. We hope it comes soon; we wish it God speed… If not you'll be lost, a rat in a trap, wishing, just wishing you could take just one step back. It's not too late to open your eyes, 'cause take it from us, inside the joint it's not time that flies…

When I Came In Here

My life got complicated when I came in here because they are always telling me what to do. When I wasn't in here I was having so much fun at parties and was waiting to attend one. Then I came in here and my life more complicated!

-Ednitra GU

From The Beat: What's complicated about having people telling you what to do all the time? It seems like your life gets complicated when you're in charge of your own decisions — and you make the wrong ones!

Last Thursday

Last Thursday my cousin was shot in the head eleven times. I was not able to attend his funeral because of the dumb mistake I made. What put me in here. I would give anything to turn back the hands of time. I'm gone miss my cousin so much. I share a tear almost every night.

-Charice GU

From The Beat: We are sorry to hear about the tragic death of your cousin. It makes us so sad to think of these tragedies happening every week, and every day! What do you have to change in your own life so that your loved ones are not shedding tears over you? Whatever you have to do (and you know what that is), we beg you to do it.

When I Got Arrested

My life got complicated when I got arrested for kidnapping, assault and battery, and possession of crack cocaine. It got complicated because a lot of people came up to see me all up in my business wanting to know about my inside life — my family, where my mom and dad work at, where they were born, who they mom and dad is, where they from, and they got in a lot of my business. If I wouldn't have got in the trouble I did, I wouldn't have went through what I went through.

-Ebony GU

From The Beat: If you kidnapped somebody, assaulted somebody and were in possession of crack, then your life was hella complicated BEFORE you got arrested. In fact, getting arrested may be the best thing that happened to you to take you away from some of those complications, at least for a while, to give yourself time to think. You clearly have the brains to think, if you'll use them. Once you enter into this world of lock-ups, then

The Beach

My favorite place to go is at Pier 39 because I was with all my friends and blowing and drinking. It was nighttime. It was windy and we was kickin' it.

Compared to this time that I'm spending in the halls. It's like you don't have no more freedom and there's rules. We can't be out at night and can't be with your friends no more.

So the beach is my favorite place to go and be when I need time for myself.

-Darlene GU

From The Beat: What did you think jail was except a place where you have to follow someone else's rules and lose your own freedom? That's why they call it jail! Is this a surprise to you? Is there any connection between your "blowing and drinking" and giving up your freedom to the system? Can you imagine having fun at Pier 39 (or anywhere) without giving up control of your thinking to alcohol? These are some of the questions you should be asking yourself while you're here, so that you don't have to come back and write sad pieces about losing your freedom…

Can't Wait

I'm tired of getting played. They keeping' me for so long. I just wanna do it, moving to my new life. I can't wait to be free to be with my girl, family, and friends.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: You say you can't wait, but of course you can — because being in lock-up means waiting... We don't know if you're being played or not, but we hope right along with you that you get out of here soon and start living the life you are capable of. We have great expectations for you, Cito. Don't let yourself down.

Complicated My Own Life

I feel I complicated my own life by running away. I messed up. I wish I never did, and I try every day to clean up the mess I've made of my life since then.

-Paradise B4

From The Beat: No one can ask any more of you than to try. How are you doing that? It's never too late to start making changes that move us in a different direction, one that preserves freedom. If you know how you messed up — and you do — then you also know what you have to do.

Things Pair Up

Well, life is always complicated. People start off with no complication. See, there's two different things if you think about it!

Well, for me growing up make things harder. But that's where we start off — shhh! That's where things get, somewhere where you don't wanna get influenced. It all pairs up everything. One word pairs up to many words, even what you can think about.

-Jafet B4

From The Beat: We're not sure what you mean when you say things pair up. Can you explain that to us? How has growing up made things more complicated for you? What are you thinking about now to make your life less complicated when you get out?

Since I Been In YGC

My life is always complicated 'cause I just don't' understand. And since I been in YGC my life has got way more complicated because I got feelings for a person, but I don't think what I want to happen 'cause I got someone telling me what I can and can't do.

It feel like that I'm goin' to go crazy because I can't just be free and do what I want to do. It's like I don't have a choice what I want to do.

-Iysis GU

From The Beat: You can express your feelings for anyone in The Beat, as long as you don't name that person or make it obvious who you are talking about. As for feeling like you're going crazy, can you explain what you mean? You're right, of course, you don't have many choices in here, but isn't that because you made bad choices out there? What do you think you have to do to get back in control of your own life, and not give that control up again?

Young Cito's Growing Up

The life I live is always hard, never easy.
While servin' time behind the bars,
all I did was hit him, left him a couple scars
Young CITO always ready to steal a couple cars
But now that I'm down, I'm ready to stop and pause
But keep it movin', following these freakin' laws
But now I'm clean, unlike these nasty drawe's
Tryin' to keep it real
Tryin' to play it off
They don't believe me 'cause
I just get it off — like when I broke my knuckle I also broke some jaws
It's not worth it, 'cause I gotta live my life
Young CITO changed because of his wife
That's my motivation, that's my strife
That's it, so now I say goodnight
I knew it, young CITO gone be all right... A'ight
Alright. A'ite

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We've seen a lot of growth in Cito during our workshops, so we have confidence that the Cito who stole cars and broke jaws was, indeed, the Young Cito, and that a new, more mature Cito will be walking out of here. With adulthood comes adult responsibilities. Is Cito up to it? We think so...

I Got Love For My Mom

I got love for my mom because if there was no her there would be no me
So when I make my green I stay thinking about mom and my family
I used to be like "screw moms," but she did not feel that way about me
She would not have me
I got love for moms with all my heart plus believe
When my ninjas say they will die for me
But I know my mom will be the only one taking my shot
That's why I am happy that I have the mom I got
Because on some real shhh she the only one I got
When my ninja not around because my mom stay ready to get down

-Young H GU

From The Beat: You say that you are thinking about your mom when you "make your green," but are you being real? Were you really thinking about your mom when you allowed this place to take you in and answer to them? We don't think so, because if you really think about her, then you wouldn't allow yourself to be taken away from her. The best gift you can give her is you, yourself, and not the green you make. We know you truly love our mom, but love is much more than just words. How will you show her what you are telling us?

Wishing, Wishing . . .

My life got complicated when I started walking in someone else's footsteps. When I started doing what my friend did. When I let pressure get to me. Now as I lay in my cell thinking about w'at the hell I did, I wish I could go back.

-Mario B4

From The Beat: The most important thing about this piece, Mario, is that you are thinking. Of course, you can't change what has already gone down, but if you don't use this time to think, then you can't really change what is going to go down in the future. Don't stop thinking. Think about what Mario wants to accomplish, and then watch others follow in your footsteps — footsteps that are taking you to a different future.

A Circus Lion

I feel like I have no power in the halls. I also feel like my baby cousin has more power and freedom than I do. I feel like a caged animal or like a circus lion, getting whipped with a leather strap. By getting whipped, I mean, like, getting sent back to my cell or caged, and I can't wait to be free.

-Lil' G B1

From The Beat: You describe your feelings of claustrophobia and powerlessness very vividly, Lil' G. But who put you in this cage? Don't you bear responsibility for putting yourself in the lion tamer's hands? We understand why you can't wait to be free, but what are you going to do that's different in order to stay free? If the answer is nothing, then you'll be back in the cage, learning a lot more tricks at the end of that whip...

Lovin' This Life

Cito, Cito, Cito... I love this life 'cause I learn a lot. Really I'm 'bout to get out, and go to work, and go to school, try to find the real me, inside me. I wish everything can go the way I want it to, 'cause I'd be happy. Real happy.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Cito, Cito, Cito... guess what? It really doesn't matter where you are to search within yourself to find the real you. You are already doing that from where you are, so we know you will keep doing it when you are free. Don't fall for the trap of thinking that freedom automatically brings happiness. There are ups and downs in everyone's life. The trick is to realize those "downs" are temporary, and keep moving forward. You can do it!

Let Me Just Look At The Water

Let me tell y'all something. Where I'm from we don't do beaches. Better believe I'm from da ghetto homie. I was raised on guns and bologna. Dat shhh right there. I can see the ocean water from da 'hood, but if I go to da beach I am going to be on the straight licks.

But I always wanted to go back to the beach and just look at the water. That's a trip I always wanted to go, but what stop me, I don't know. I am out.

-DeAndre B4

From The Beat: We want to encourage you to actually achieve this dream to go to the beach and just look at the water. Do it, DeAndre. Not with your homies. Not with your crimies. Just with yourself. Go in the evening when the sun is setting and the stars are just coming out. Go and look, and listen to the sound of the waves as they hit the beach, over and over, like an endless lullaby. There is absolutely no reason in the world why you can't do this — except for your belief that you can't. That belief is wrong, and it is keeping you from enjoying a simple but profound pleasure. Do it just once, for yourself and by yourself, and then tell us how you feel.

I

It is easy for people to solve over people problems, but it's hard to solve our own. Who me? Yeah, I do this. Why I do say this? 'Cause I see it.

I try to be different form my peers and hold back my feelings of anger, greed, lust, and sadness, but it's hard to bottle up all my feelings and not tell anybody how I feel.

-V-Time B4

From The Beat: We know just what you mean, Greg. It always seems easier to focus on other people's problems than our own. We don't know why you feel you have to bottle up those emotions, because that can't be good for you. When you stuff your emotions down deep inside, they have a way of exploding when you least expect it. We all experience these emotions (anger, greed, lust and sadness), but it's how we deal with them that sometimes makes the difference between control them or letting them control us. We hope you can use the pages of The Beat to let it all hang out!

Nobody Should Be In Jail

YGC is not the place to be. Wearing the same stuff every day. What the hell am I doing behind a door that I can't even open? What the hell am I doing behind a barbwire fence like I'm a dog? Why am I letting myself get treated like a animal? Looking at the same faces everyday, can't even open a window to get fresh air. Jail life ain't fo' nobody.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: Your right about that for sure. Jail is what we call no man's land for sure. Every one of your questions is a good one. We'd love to read your answers...

About Me

Let me tell you about me. I am one of them girls sitting up in YGC
That's not me I'm always saying, that but I keep on coming back.
So what's good because I'm away from my family and my 'hood
This is not good but moms always tell me something happen for a reason
I sit up on my box looking at my socks
'Cause I could've been here for selling them rocks
I could've been where it never get hot
But sooner or later the cops would've come to the spot
So that's good I'm not in here for selling them rocks
Because I really will be on my box looking at these socks
Because me doing this shhh making my green
Ain't doing shhh but buying me my bling bling
And I need to stop worrying about the next girl making her green.

-Young H GU

From The Beat: It seems like you realize you got a break by not being busted for selling crack, but unless you use this break to your advantage, what good is it? Making your green may be buying you bling-bling, but it's also buying you time in the sling... And what you say about "the next girl" is true — it's really time for you to focus on you!

The Beach

I like going to the beach. Most of the time I go to the beach with my friend. We be having a good time. One time we cut school and went to pier 39. We was walking along the beach and we saw this girl with like three or four boys. So I went over there and started messin' with the boys so we can get the girl mad. Then she keep telling the boys to come on so they can get on, but we was still talking to them. Then the boys had gave us they number so she got hella mad. But I like going to the beach all the time.

-Donecia GU

From The Beat: What's so fun about getting another girl mad at you? Why did you want to do that? If you had been walking along the beach with some of your friends, and another girl did what you did, how would you react? Anyway, it didn't get that serious, so that's good. Did you ever hook up with those boys?

When I Get Out

When I get out, I am not go' make no more bad mistakes. I go' do better than what I did the first time. And when I get out I am going to spend time with my family. And stay out of trouble. Then I stay out of the gangs and I am do what I got to do.

-Young JT B1

From The Beat: Sounds good, Young JT. But what do mean you "got to do"? Without a real plan, you're letting others plan for you. So, what is the first step in your plan to stay free? We hope it begins with going to school every day. Not only is it necessary for your future, but it keeps you off those mean streets while you're there. Think about it.

At The Mall

One day I went to the mall, and went in. First step while I'm looking around the store, I see some clear-ass jeeztas, so I put them on and started to step my way back to the car. The jeeztas had control of me at the time, because I did not have a 135 dollars when I was in the store, so my jeeztas had me thinking at the time. So I see y'all when I see you stay strong for yourself in the Beat Within. So I'm going.

-Shelly-M GU

From The Beat: We don't agree that those shoes had you thinking. Instead, they had you not thinking, the one sure way to land yourself here, or worse. Look down at your feet right now and tell us about the stylish shoes you're wearing now... Was it worth it?

My Plan

I'm goin' to finish high school then and get my diploma. Then go to City College of San Francisco, take four units and play football.

I have a construction job lined up for me when I get out of the Ranch. And I'm goin' to look for other employment opportunities.

I'm goin' to do school and work and take care of my grandmother and seed.

-Cash B4

From The Beat: Well, in our first response, we asked you to share some of your plans for success — but you beat us to the punch. You gave us what we asked for without even knowing we asked! This is a great plan. Stick with it.

New Father

Wassup Beat? This yo' boy Young Jeff up here in weak-ass B5. I'm talking 'bout my family that I just now had. Well first for y'all who don't know me, I was born in San Francisco, grew up in Hunter's Point. I have five brothers and three sisters. I have been here 17 times and now I have and daughter, so when I come to juvenile hall I think of ways to make it work out for me, her and her mom.

We named her Daeshanae. Her mother name is Ramiesha. She's from another city but I love her 'cause that's my boo. I'm goin' to the Ranch next week so when I complete the Ranch I plan on being right there in my lil' girl's life 'cause that's what fathers do. I love my family 'cause can't nobody tell me what to do and how to take care of them. Me and my baby mother has been together for 10 months but the first month I was with her I knew she was the one for me so I pregnated her and ever since it's all worked out. I have a loving family so whoever said that thugs don't love is a lie. But I'm out.

-Young Jeff B5

From The Beat: Congratulations on having Daeshanae, Young Jeff. There is nothing like having a child to focus your attention on what is truly important in your life. But still we worry because you are not where you should be right now, which is with your child. If you've been here 17 times, Jeff, then you're going to have to make some radical changes in your life if you are do "what father's do," so we hope this marks the starting point of a new life for you. We hope you don't think you can do just a little of what got you in trouble in the past and not pay the price. Your daughter deserves all of you.

Looking Towards The Future

I'm kinda down and depressed 'cause my life was pretty hard so far. But from now on it's going to be good. I don't like talkin' about the past or the crimes or the way life is, but I do like talkin' about the future 'cause my future is gonna be how I make it. I don't know how that is though...

-Cito B4

From The Beat: We're all about the future, Cito, so we don't mind how much you talk about it (as long as it doesn't include the mistakes of the past).

Got In The Game Too Fast

My life got complicated when I got into that game too fast, when I started buyin' stuff in bigger sizes, buyin' more clothes, jewelry and all da goods son... You hear me, dough!

I got a car, two pocket bikes and two otha illegal items from the game, clothes, an' all that from the game.

But to every action there's a reaction. Here I go thinkin' I'ma big dawg 'cause the narcotics was hot on me on that block an' I'm payin' the price...

Yeah, I'm back

-Crackhead GU

From The Beat: So what has all that dough brought you now? The best county clothes, fine underwear, stylish shoes — and adults who care enough about you to tell you when to go to the bathroom, when to wake up, when and what to eat, when to talk, when to play, etc. You said it exactly right — every action has a reaction. Are you going to use the brains that let you play the game so young to play a different game, the one that begins with a good education and leads to places other than lock-ups, or are you going to try to be slicker than the last time, and find yourself in worse places than this?

Stay Up, Do Right

Yeah man, what's really good with The Beat and my folks that's down in the halls? It's your boy Art Cash. Yeah, I'm back, but it's nothing. They can't hold real ninjas down forever, ya hear me? So keep you head up while y'all down in the halls.

I ran from this group home and was out on the run with the homie for a minute. The homies got took down, then I got took down. I can go to the Ranch, another grouper or Glenn Mills, but I might go to the Ranch and just knock my time 'cause when you on the run sooner or later your coming back to 375 Woodside one day.

So to y'all wherever y'all go, knock your time out so you could be good off probation.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Coming back to this place is never nothing. It's always something. And of you think they "can't hold real ninjas down forever," then you must also think the 200,000 prisoners locked up in this state (and two million in the country) are all fake, all fools, right? You're smarter than all of them, right? If not, you'd better check yourself before you find out just how tight they can turn the screws. Whether you go to the Mills, to another group home or to the Ranch, your success (or failure) depends on what you bring to the program. If you're looking to "knock out your time" (as if you already know everything you need to know in the world), you'll be in exactly this same situation down the line, only with harsher consequences. If you go thinking there are things you can learn, things that might make your life easier, then you have a chance to avoid a fate that is just waiting to gobble you up!

Rolling The Dice

I never ever want to come back because they never give me no slack
I wish it would all go away and never come back
I wish I did not fight
Because look where it got me
Now the next ninja rolling my dice on my life
Because if that ninja do not roll seven it is the end of my life
So you know I got to get with the movement and go roll my dice
Before it is the end of my life
So you know what I got to do
Start off by going to school
And find a new dude.

-Young H GU

From The Beat: Going to school is a must if you are to move beyond the life that leads you here, so we encourage you to follow through. As for finding a new dude, we're not nearly as encouraging. Our experience tells us that you need to focus on you, and not on what some dude thinks you should be doing...

The Beat Interviews Slow Pain

TBW: Hi, Slow Pain. How you doin' today?
SP: Good.
TBW: So, Mr. Slow Pain, what do you feel like being interviewed about today?
SP: Mi Vida Loca (My Crazy Life)
TBW: Great. Tell us anything you like about your crazy life. Where do you want to start?
SP: From the beginning. I came to the US when I was very young, from Salvador.
TBW: Why did your family come here? Because of the civil war in Salvador?
SP: I don't know nothin' about no war. My family came here to live a better life.
TBW: That makes sense. How did your family get here?
SP: On the plane.
TBW: What happened to you when you got here?
SP: I went to Everett Middle School and I started hanging with the locos and then I got jumped in the gang when I was eleven. I was the youngest one on my block in the gang. I got jumped in by older people. I decided to call myself Slow Pain and make my name an' my respect. I picked up my first charge making my name.
TBW: What happened to your first charge?
SP: I was tryna stab someone 'cause he was from a different gang. I was feeling angry because he was walking on my block like it was nothing. He crossed the line.
TBW: Why was he walking on your block?
SP: He was going to school.
TBW: So he's not allowed to go through your gang's territory to go to school?
SP: No.
TBW: Often you write about your love and loyalty to your girlfriend, Mitzy, and your love a respect for your homeboys, right?
SP: Yeah.
TBW: Does your loyalty for your gang ever conflict with your love for Mitzy?
SP: I got love for both.
TBW: Does it ever happen that your girlfriend wants you to hang with her some nights and your gang wants you to put in work for your 'hood?
SP: Sometimes she be tellin' me, "Let's go to the movies" and stuff, but my homies tell me, "Let's go to a party," and I sometimes prefer my block to my girl and she get mad.
TBW: Because you leave her home?
SP: Yeah, but when I get back, I bring her some flowers.
TBW: Does that make it OK with her?
SP: Yeah. And sometimes my homie soldados come to my house to pick me up to go with some other girls to a party, and every time we go there, we get in trouble—start fighting.
TBW: What do you fight over?
SP: The girls there.
TBW: Did your girlfriend ever bust you with these other girls your homies fixed you up with?
SP: No.
TBW: So if she reads this, you're in trouble, right?
SP: Yup. When I get out I want to be with her all the time to get the time back—all the time we lost when I was in jail.
TBW: When you have such a wonderful girlfriend, why are you willing to risk your relationship with her by going with other girls?
SP: Because I'm on my game. But I would die for my block and my family.
TBW: And your girl?
SP: No. Yeah.
TBW: Do you ever go with other girls?
SP: Yeah, all the time.
TBW: Because you want to or because your homies want you to?
SP: Because I want to.
TBW: But you always write about your Mitzy.
SP: Yeah, but I get drunk and my mind changes.
TBW: Changes to what?
SP: To a crazy vato. A bad man.
TBW: Have you ever been back to your birth nation, Salvador, since you first came to the USA when you were three?
SP: I've been back several times to see my cousins, my grandfather. I just went to Salvador for a couple months. The first time for Christmas time. The last two times because my grandfather was sick and I was there for, like two months, because the police was tappin' on me because I have all these tattoos. They was like, "If I see you one more time, I'm going to take you to the carcel (jail).
TBW: Because they think you belong to a gang in the US?
SP: Lots of times gang members from the US go back to Salvador to make trouble. They have gangs in Salvador, Honduras, Panama, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, all over (Central America).

- Slow Pain LCRS

From The Beat: Nice interview that speaks of you coming to the USA at three, but what you jump to is going to middle school. What was your life like as a grade schooler? Were you a good boy? Did you help out at home? What type of work did your parents do? Was it hard living? What was your neighborhood like when you were little? Why did you get jumped into a gang? Hey, why don't you write your story? Share a chapter every week with us! Start back at yoru earliest childhood recollection. Give us details! Allow us to understand you and your family and how it has gotten to this point for you, where you sit in LCRS.

If I Was Out

If I was out right now I would probably be doing the same thing — gettin' money, messin' with girls, bein' with the same crowd, playing with guns, knowing it was not the right thing to do, and I was breaking the law and not caring about it, really, because it's like the life for me, smokin' weed, drinkin', poppin' pills, and playin' wit' guns. When I first started playin' wit' guns was when I was ten years old, and, to me, it's tha thing to do, because I grew up in it so long. So I don't know nothing else.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: If you "don't know nothing else" it's only because you don't want to know. It's out there (and in here) for you to learn, but frankly, we think you're not strong enough to do it. You're going for what you think is easy because it's what you're familiar with. And all that means is that you'll be seeing lots more of the insides of places like this, except they won' be nearly as easy as this place. We're sure you will grow up one day and realize that your freedom is the one precious gift not worth giving away as carelessly as you've done so far and as you promise to do again, but we're not sure that maturity will come in time. The worst thing of all is to grow up one second too late, and spend the rest of your life (or some significant portion of it) saying, "If only..."

The Day I Cried

The day I cried is when the day my big bra OG died. He died on Valentine's Day. I had just left him and two minutes later I heard a boom and I ran back up to his house and he was layin' on the floor with a big hole in his head. Anyways, I cried all day long.

I had been knowin' him all my life. And in just a split second he was dead. Man, I did not know what to do. That's the day I cried. I learned that stuff can happen at any given moment. I really miss him. And nothin' changed since then. I love you, OG, for life.

-Daddy-O B1

From The Beat: How many more tragedies like this terrible event can your community endure without totally crumbling? You learned something critical about how fragile life is — and how permanent death is! And since nothing has changed on the street, has anything changed in you? If not, then your friend's death has no purpose. If yes, then perhaps his death has saved you from a similar fate. So tell us, how have you changed as a result of this tragedy?

Being Incarcerated——Part Of A G's Life

Log Cabin Ranch been terrible for a G. I been here for three weeks and people like talking smack. I get heated up with my homies by my side. It's crazy to think about that we have to stay here for seven months, but we have to do it--it's part of a G life. The staff are horrible, but sometimes they're cool when they want to be.

I miss you, Alva. I hope one day we could meet again. To all in the outs, keep handling your business. I'm out.

-Anothony LCRS

From The Beat: Many of the staff at the Ranch have been there for over twenty years and really try their best to listen and help all of you deal with the reality of the outs and the system. It is horrible to have to do what anyone else tells you to do, including counselors, but one lesson they're trying to teach you is that you don't want to go to prison where many people have the right to tell you what to do. Does that make any sense? So, as pissed off as you are, the only person you can truly blame is yourself for the poor choices you have made.

Thoughts

The Shield facility... Where I've returned for a night. I suppose I'm due to a trip to the ophthalmologist...Can't see out of my left eye...I need to wear glasses again!

Today they blinded me for a few hours and made me wear these dark shades. Pretty Darth. Anyway...as hard as I try, I can't get my mind off of her! Even got mad at her. Yo, I was angry! But I got rid of those flames before they ignited! Love? The only name for the feeling filling my heart... The urge to hold her in my arms again, this excruciating pain in my brain that only eases up after that soft touch...keeps me motivated, as she always has, as we always have motivated each other.

To do what we must to be together! I remember a night I could see from my left eye...a short-term "boost" of vision...I remember when I felt what true love is...a feeling I've searched for, for what seemed to be eternity.

I remember when you completed my soul. Do you remember? I remember a short-term memory...a short-term memory that will remember one thing until the end of time...that kid you wake up next to, watching you sleep before he gets up for school, morning after morning...will always love you, too.

-Biggie Littles LCRS

From The Beat: What's wrong with your eye, Biggie Little? What is the Shield facility? Is it LCRS? As for the other names you dropped in your piece, given we were not sure who you are writing about, we left the names out of your piece.

In just a split second he was dead.
Man, I did not know what to do.
That's the day I cried.

My Home Away From Home

My life is not complicated. It's how I want it. I chose my life. It was myself to say let's go kick it with the homeys, and it was my fault that I got in to this so-called Juvenile system. Oh, that punk fool snitch on me. The block is the place I grew up an' it like home. It is home.

-Jeffrey B2

From The Beat: As long as the block is like your home, you'd better get used to this place (and the far worse places they have waiting for you) because it will be your home away from home. Don't blame the "punk fool snitch" for your own choices. Like you said, you made 'em. Now live the consequences!

Free The Block

Free the block, man, Beat. Like ten of my big homies are in the pen because they got indicted because they did something dumb, but I don't know why. They facing up to 25 years, and I learned that I don't want to be like them. So I'm go' try to stay off the block and just do what my mom tell me, so I won't come back. All because of snitches. Is not a game, so stop snitchn'. Man, I miss my dogs.

-Chuck B1

From The Beat: No, you definitely don't want to go to prison, so whatever you have to do, whoever you have to listen to in order to stay free, do it. There will always be snitches, Chuck, because the system offers big rewards to those who give up their friends. So there is only one way not to fall victim to snitches, and that's to stop doing the things that they can snitch you out for.

Thank You, Beat

What it do Beat? This ya boy Stoffice. Life is very hectic. I'm finna leave tomorrow. Hopefully I complete my program.

It was good working with The Beat. Shout out to Perry. He a cool homie. The Beat always help me with expressing my feelings. I'm fresh out. Stay up Perry you gone make it!

The kid is outro.

-Daddy Stoffice B2

From The Beat: We appreciate the thanks, Stoffice, but like we always say, there is no Beat without you, so we want to thank you. Perry is indeed gone make it, so we hope you let all that he's been through and all that he's overcome be like a beacon to you. You can accomplish just as much if that's what you want to do. We hope it is.

Everyone

Everyone knows right from wrong
Everyone wants to have fun
Everyone should know what goes around comes around
Everyone wants to be free
Everyone knows breaking the law leads to jail
Everyone wants the best for them
Everyone knows it could happen
Everyone wants to be rich
Everyone knows only fame will lead you to be rich
In the end
Everyone only watches for themselves

-Lil' E B1

From The Beat: Not everyone only watches for themselves, Eric. When you think of what your mother and father have done for you, do you really think they only watch out for themselves? From all the other lines in this tight poem, it's clear to us that the one person who was not watching out for you was you! Now's the time to change that picture...

Hoping

Just another day in my cell thinking about if I'm going to hell, trying to relax. And hope I get out by bail if not, forget it.

-David B2

From The Beat: There is no bail for juvenile offenses, so you can forget that one. We wish you'd spend a little of that thinking time on what it is that got you here, and therefore what it is you have to stop doing so as to stay out of here.

Not The Same Person

My life is complicated because I wish I can be two different people. But I can't, that's why life is complicated. Because at times I'm not the same person.

-Hot Rod B2

From The Beat: Have you ever heard of the book, "Dr. Jeckyll and Mr. Hyde" by Robert Louis Stevenson? You should read it.

I Want To Go To A Placement Near Home

What's up Beat?

I went to court last Thursday. It seems like they only giving me one choice and that is Glenn Mills. I don't want to go that far, so I am trying to call my PO so I can talk to him so I can leave sooner and to a placement in CA. If I go to a placement in the Bay Area, I will get visits every week from my friends and family. So I hope everything goes well. Peace out.

-Lil' E B1

From The Beat: We can understand why you would want to stay where your family can visit, Eric, but that's why the time to think is before you do what you did and not after. If you do go to Glen Mills, we hope you go with an open mind, because we believe that there are great programs there to help you prepare to live the kind of life we know you are capable of and desire. If you go expecting to hate it, then that's what will happen. If you go hoping to love it (or love those parts that are worth loving), then that's what will happen. Whatever happens, though, keep writing to us so we can keep in touch with you and learn what you're doing. Good luck.

AWOL

When I AWOLed from the group home, I was glad to be on tha block, back with ma ninjas smokin' weed and everything that I always do, havin' the block rollin'. Now, when I look back on that, I think that it was not the right thing to do and I made the wrong choice, and I would not want to do it again. To all going to group homes, stay and pimp it.

-Lil' Purp B1

From The Beat: Haven't you said in the past that you wouldn't be back, that you wouldn't do those things that caused you to lose your freedom? What's different this time? If you were back in the group home now, how would you handle it?

If I go to a placement in the Bay Area, I will get visits every week from my friends and family.

Power Outage

I've had a power outage for a while now because when I was out it seemed like I was going stupid... not stupid but like I was getting closer and closer to juvenile no matter how good I was doing because it's always a hater mad that you're doing better than him/her.

To be particular, it seemed like this person wanted me to come in past 6 p.m., past curfew. It was too late for me to realize or get back in my state of mind that nobody will do time for you other than yourself, and that while you're in Juvenile, the game will not wait for you and your ninjas won't either. They're going to be doing the same old shhh, which is true because the past seven months I've realized and seen who my real ninjas are.

As a matter of fact I don't have real ninjas, I got associates, family, and ninjas I just kick it with. My power outage is that I can't keep it real without young brothers crossing my back besides family

-MJ B2

From The Beat: It's a shame that someone else influenced you to break your curfew, and now you have to pay the price. But Mike, the truth is that you are ultimately responsible for your own choices. There will always be people who want you to join them in doing things with potentially negative (even deadly) consequences, but unless someone has put a gun to your head and ordered you into it, you always have the ability to say, "No." Of course, it takes courage to do that. It's one of the hardest things any of us ever has to do, especially when we want to be accepted by them. But that's exactly why it takes courage. So, we hope you can find the courage you need in the future to do what you know is right, and not to do what someone else tells you to do even when you know it's not.

I Don't Belong Here

My life got complicated this week because I'm stressing, looking at these white walls.

It happened by "committing a crime." Man, I don't need or belong here. This lifestyle I been living is no good, just as my life decisions.

W'en I get out, I'm planning on gettin a job, and takin' care of business, but I feel that I'm not goin' to get out soon, so I'm tryin' to stay strong and keep my head up. I never been incarcerated, so I don't know. Never been in a gang. Makin' good decisions.

-Steven B1

From The Beat: It sounds like you already know what choices you've made that you can't make again, right Steven? It's much easier to commit to doing the right thing when you're locked up and missing freedom than when you have that freedom and are once again faced with all the temptations you were before, so we hope this experience is enough for you to sacrifice a few things that you like doing to avoid a future that you hate. Good luck!

The Beach

I would like to go to the beach when there is a place that you can BBQ, like Baker Beach so I could BBQ while I am at the beach. And if I get hot from BBQ, I could go down to the beach and play with water.

-Simon B2

From The Beat: We hope you get the chance to do this soon, Simon. And we hope you remember how much you missed doing it when you were locked up so that you won't have to repeat the mistakes of the past.

Remembering A Sweeter Past

My beach where I like to just chill and lay back is my old house in Pittsburg when everything was cool my mom was alive and I lived with my brother and sister. Why I choose that place was because it was the best time of my life. My family was happy and I was too. Just wish my mom was alive 'cause she can always make the best out of any situation. May God rest her soul. See you when I get up there.

-Cuba B2

From The Beat: We're sure your mom is in no hurry for you to join her where she is watching over you. You know what she wants from you, so can you give it to her? Can you live your life in a way that would make her proud of you? We hope so.

You Like Me

Pull up to party
Ripped off Bicardi
Lookin' for a breezy
That's ready to get naughty
Hop out the coop
Black Gibeaus on
Fresh Js (Jordans) on my feet
I'm off the Hennessy
So get like me
'Cause you like me
I'm always at the party
Lookin' for a fine shorty
That I can kick it with
And I can spend a couple bills
And eat a couple meals
Pop a few pills
Go to the telly
For a couple hours
Leave from the telly
Hop in the coop
Go to the movies

-T Money LCRS

From The Beat: This is the lifestyle that will wash you in the end! Hasn't it already hurt you? Look where you sit tonight! Don't you think it's time to see a new way, a way to the schoolhouse, a way to legit living. Leave the pills, the telly and the alcohol! All this adds up to destruction.

Mi Vida Loca

What's up to all
Loving my barrio
Loving my jaina
Loving my mom
'Til the day we die
True love
True war
Represent the block
To the day I die
Don't wake me
I love the war
With my lil' homies
Always in the block
One name, one color
One block, that's my life
Respeto and love to all

-Slow Pain LCRS

From The Beat: We understand that your block has your whole heart, but knowing what we know from this love, it's gonna hurt you in a big time way very soon/ What kind of family do they provide for you? Is your mom proud of you showing this love to a block? How do they influence you in a good way? Do they encourage you to go to school? Get a real job? Help your family? Wake up! Then again, you'll wake up when you are ready, we hope it won't be when you are on the gray goose off to prison.

That Beach

I hate da beach because da water's dirty. It's ugly. People hangin' 'round... and I had a bad experience...

-Crackhead GU

From The Beat: Don't tease us with that last line just hanging out like that... what happened to you at the beach? If you start changing your act and doing what you should be doing, then one day you might be able to take a vacation to places like Hawaii where the beaches are white and clean, the water is so clear you can see all the way to the bottom, and most of the people are brown and beautiful. Something to look forward to...

Complicated

C- is for the choices I have made in life
O- is for the outstanding things I done
M- is for the money I made
P- is for the people I love
L- is for liking and giving each other
I- is for I'm independent
C- is for caring for myself
A- is for my good attitude
T- is for the talent I have
E- is for the education I want
D- is for my wonderful dreams.

-Ladiamond GU

From The Beat: We're very curious about two of your letter explanations. If O is for the outstanding things you've done, tell us what they were, and what made them outstanding. And, if E is for the education you want, tell us how you plan to achieve it.

Complicated

How my life got complicated is when I first came here to YGC. I been here so long that sometimes I don't think I'ma ever get out, like I ain't never gone get out.

-Bee Bop B2

From The Beat: The complication of coming to YGC would never have occurred if you hadn't complicated your life first by giving the system a reason to bring you to YGC. If you can see your own responsibility for where you are, then you have a chance to uncomplicated your life. Otherwise, the complications can only get worse.

Beach

When I go to the beach I like to go and just relax away from problems that stressin' me. So I go to the beach and just go and see what goin' on.

-Iysis GU

From The Beat: We know just what you mean about going to the beach to feel free from your problems. What's your favorite beach?

SANTA CRUZ

The Question I Would Ask Myself

I would ask myself why do I do what I do. But I have no answer because I am talking to myself. So I know the answer. See, I can ask for the answer but get no answer because I know it, but I don't. It's like something you know, but you don't. And that's being real, because why would I lie to myself? So the question can be answered.

-Ray

From The Beat: Well, we sort of do and we sort of don't - know what you mean, that is. It has been said by some that we cannot lie to ourselves. If that's true, you may know more than you think you know. But you'll have to ask the right questions, if you want the right answers.

A Middle School Rock Bottom

One point in my life I really did think I hit rock bottom. It was in eighth grade when they said I might have to repeat it. And that's when I felt like dropping out of school. But then my family stepped in and started to help me out in school. And I ended up graduating with As and Bs.

-Juan

From The Beat: And here you are in juvy. Where does this rate on the scale of being close to the bottom?

Do Over

My 'do over' would be this last charge for a gun. It's not worth it.

-Anti-Gun

From The Beat: We believe you and we agree with you.

Do-Overs

If I could have 'do-overs', I'd go back to when I last got arrested, and instead of saying I wouldn't have gotten drunk, I would probably just choose a different spot to drink, or run, instead of sitting there with my thumb up my ass. Because the truth is, I would still have gotten drunk, and if not then, eventually I would have.

-Guy

From The Beat: Sounds like you have a problem Guy. And sounds like you have no desire to address it. You 'do-over' isn't much of a 'do-over'. It's really an avoidance. One good thing is that you seem to acknowledge that you do have a problem, even if it's in a backward way. The real issue

A Renewal Of Faith

I pocketed someone like a thief.
I got my bottle five-finger discount.
It was a relief when I got off the hot sand.
I threw a pansy out the window
without wasting a breath.
I fell asleep during history
and renewed my faith.

-Shane

From The Beat: So, it's dreamland that replenishes your energy. And about that five-finger discount. What you don't pay for now, you pay for later.

Fear

Well, one thing I feared as a kid was my dad. The reason why is because when I was young, my dad used to beat my mom and me. My brother would try to stop it, but would get thrown out of the way. So now, when I see anyone disrespect my mom, they have to deal with me, and my older brother. And that's no joke.

-Young Brother

From The Beat: We hope your mom is safe now, and we hope you'll soon be able go home.

In My Time Capsule

If I were to make a time capsule, I would put a picture of myself, some pictures of my family, some jewelry, fashionable clothes I wear, what I did for a living, my school degrees, and my favorite game in it. I would put all this in so they could know what I did for a living. Also, so they could know what a great guy I was.

-Juan

From The Beat: Hey, would you leave any writing, something to let folks know who you loved, what you liked to read, what made you happy, what made you sad? These are also things that would help to paint a picture of you, things that curious folks would want to know. We are more than our belongings.

What Is Life

Life is a bunch of bull shhh.
You do this and that, and you always end up
in trouble.
Life is love and hate, war and peace.
It's all that and more on this place called
earth.

-Mike

From The Beat: Yes, much more, really – but you have to be open to it. You can't close yourself off. It's what you do that counts. What kind of a life do you want?

A Rock Bottom Point

At one point in my life I felt there was no hope. I felt like a complete failure. I wish I could take it all back.

-Shane

From The Beat: But there is hope, as you have discovered. And our hope is that you've made up your mind to pursue the good. We all deserve to be happy.

I Worry About My Mom Without Me

I fear a lot of things. When I am in here, I fear about my mom. I worry about her, 'cause she has lost so many losses. I am pretty much her only person left. And now I am in here. I can't imagine how much my mom struggles and worries. So, for me, I worry about that.

-Davis

From The Beat: We don't get it. You sure as hell were not thinking of mom, when you did whatever you did to get locked up, were you? And yes you may be right, that your mom worries about you, because if you're lonely, scared, confused, angry, etc., up in juvy, there's not much she can do to help or comfort you. The time is now to straighten up and fly right to make mom proud!

I Got Arrested In Front Of My Girlfriend

I would have to say that I'm at my rock bottom right now, because today I got arrested in front of my girlfriend. I could tell by her face she was sad and disappointed.

We've been dating for a year and I don't know how long it will be before I see her. I'm facing a felony and violation of probation.

All I know is I'm at the bottom of my rock and top is her. So that's what I'm trying to get to.

-J

From The Beat: That's rough J, well it can only go up from this point, right? What are you going to do to capture her heart and that magic feeling again?

A Life Do Over

I wish I could do over my life. I wish I could fix every mistake I have done. I wish I never got myself locked up. I wish I could do over my life.

-Mac

From The Beat: What mistakes that you've made have hurt others or yourself the most, Mac? Have you learned any valuable lessons from those mistakes? If you've taught yourself that you don't want to mess up the same way again, that's a good start. Once you're out of juvy, can you give yourself a pretty clean slate, trust yourself, and start again?

Love Is When . . .

What is love? I think love is when you really like the person that you love and can't stop thinking about them, and you couldn't see yourself without that person if they left you. Love is when you have uncontrollable feelings about the one you love. Love is when you dream about him or her a lot and talk about him too damn much. That's what I think love is.

-Chloe

From The Beat: Sounds like you've been there. Still in love? How would you describe this relationship today? What are the challenges?

Fear of A Burning Hell

I fear hell—just burning with all the people who haven't let God in their life. I fear death, my deepest fear. Life is a privilege—some people take life for granted and lose their prize possession.

-Khayree

From The Beat: Probably everybody fears death and/or some kind of hell, Khayree, partly because we all know we're all going to die and not be on this earth any more. It can make us lonely and scared. The time is now to get out and live your life with as much joy as you can. Nothing will stop any of us from dying, but we can be grateful and happy for the life we're given.

What's Love?

I think love is when you really like the person you wit'. You wanna be wit' them fo' a good minute. You think about them 24/7... When you wit' that person, you get butterflies in yo' stomach and you care and trust that person wit' you whole heart. That's what I pretty much think love is.

This to my baby!

-Angelica

From The Beat: Sounds like you know what love is. Remember if you abuse it, you're gonna lose it. And when you lose it, it stinks, and hopefully we learn plenty to not make the same mistakes the next go 'round when love comes a callin'.

Wit' A Thizz

Wit' a thizz
Here I go again
I pop pop thizz
O what a relief it is
I got my OJ
If you know what I mean
'Cause I need it

-Rock Bottom

From The Beat: So you jack your thizz high up with orange juice, Rock Bottom! Now what? Why do you need it? How are you managing without your thizz in juvy? Do you thing you can manage without it when you're free again? Or if you're caught with it, you will be back in juvy.

What I Think About Love

What is love? Ha ha. I think that love is when you're wit' that person, you're hella happy. You jus' have a feeling with that person that you ain't ever have! And when you is with that person, don't shhh matter but you an' him! Sometimes you guys may do things and get embarrassed, but at the same time, you know he ain't goin' to care, 'cause he love you! And you got to see yo'self with him in the future, 'cause if you ain't see that, shhh ain't goin' to work out, and if he love yo' ass, he will wait fo' you! That what I think love is!

-Deanna

From The Beat: Love is being happy for sure. Being thrilled to be with the person you care about every chance you get. As for waiting for you, or vice-a-versa, well you may love that person, but how long should one wait?

Fear

When I was little, I was scared of Freddy Kruger. It was just growing up. I feared him because he has knives for fingers and the worst thing is that he kills you in the street.

My other fear now is being raped, because I don't want to feel the pain and being sexually active with a stranger.

-Raven

From The Beat: Freddy Kruger is really scary, Raven, even for some people who are grown. And being afraid of being raped is something most fear, too, for the reasons you write and because of the terror, humiliation and fury at someone who doesn't even know you, hate or fear you, overwhelming and hurting you. You can be really careful with who you hang out with, where you walk, especially alone at night. We wish you the best!

VOICES IN SPANISH

Mañana Salgo

Que onda Beat? Yo soy Silent. Pues fijensen que hoy cumplo un mes de estar aqui encerrado, pero mañana miercoles 12 de Julio salgo libre. Cuando salga de aqui voy a visitar a mi jaina, despues a la otra y tengo otra mas pero no se nada de ella. Dos de mi jainas son de una pandilla y la otra no es nada.

From The Beat: Ten cuidado que por andar con muchas chavas, puedes contraer cualquier enfermedad sexual. También puedes traerte muchos dolores de cabeza. ¿Una pregunta, te gustaria que a la jaina que más quieres tenga varios novios?

I Get Out

What's up Beat? I am Silent. Well, y'all peep this: Today marks a month that I have been here locked up, but tomorrow, Wednesday, July 12th, I am getting out and be free again. When I get out of here, I am going to visit my girlfriend, then go see my other girlfriend, and I have another one, but I don't know anything about her. Two of my girlfriends are from a gang, but the other one is from nothing.

-Silent, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Be careful because by being with lots of females, you could contract a sexually transmittable disease. You can also bring lots of headaches to yourself. One question: Would you like it if the girlfriend that you love the most had various boyfriends?

Le Tenía Miedo A Mi Hermano

Cuando tenía seis años le tenía miedo a mi hermano mayor hasta que cumpli los 12 años. Despues me dije que si le iba a tener miedo todo el tiempo, nunca me iba a sentir mejor. Mi hermano también le pegaba a mis dos hermanos y más a mi hermana. Un día me cansé y le dije si les vuelves a pega te voy a partir el osico. Me dijo, tienes huevo para hacer eso. Le conteste y me pego el primero, despues le rompi el osico. Me dijo "tienes huevo vato." Desde entonces le perdi el miedo. Me dijo que era bueno con la derecha y que le mirara el ojo morado.

From The Beat: ¿Tubistes que peliar con el para poder obtener ese respeto? Hay muchas maneras como obtener respeto y haber peliado no hubiera sido necesario. Lo bueno es que tu hermano entendio bien las cosas y todo quedo como hermanos. Esperamos que tu hermano haya aprendido la lección de no lastimar a nadie. ¿Sabia el que pegarle a alguién en este pais es ilegal?

I Was Scared Of My Brother

When I was six years old, I was scared of my older brother until I turned twelve. Then, I told myself that if I was going to be scared of him all the time, I was never going to feel better. My brother also hit my two other brothers and even more so my sister. One day I got fed up and I told him if he hit them again, I was going to pop him in the mouth. He told me, "You have balls in order to do this." I answered back and he hit me first, then I popped him in the mouth. He told me, "You have balls, dude." Ever since that moment, I lost all fear I had for him. He told me that I was good with my right hand and to take look at his purple eye.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: You had to fight with him in order to gain that respect? There are many other ways to obtain respect and having to fight would not have been necessary. The good thing, though, is your brother understood things very well and everything was left as being resolved between brothers. We hope your brother has learned the lesson not to injure anyone. Did he know that hitting someone in this country is illegal?

Lo Que Quiero Hacer

Como estan? Yo estoy aqui escribiendo unas lineas para decirles quesi yo pudiera hacer alto otra vez yo cambiaría todos los errores que hice.

Esta vez voy a pensar primero antes de hacer algo malo como peliarme o andar en malos pasos. Voy a tratar de hacer algo positivo y no lo negativo.

From The Beat: Nos parece excelente que estes pensando de esta manera. Lo mejor que puedes hacer en esta situación es en como mejorar tu vida. ¿A ver, cuales son tus planes?

What I Want To Do

How are you? Here I am writing a few lines to tell you that if I could do one thing over again, I would correct all the errors I've done.

This time I will think before doing something bad like before fighting or being on bad steps. I'm going to try to do positive things and not negative things.

-Jose B1

From The Beat: We think this is an excellent move to think this way. The best thing you can do while being in this situation is in fixing your life. What are your plans?

Ya No Voy A CYA

Orale Beat! Que trazas? Soy Diablito. Pues aqui nomas kicking back con los homies. Tengo una buena noticias. El otro día les conte que me iban a mandar a CYA, pero el juez me dió otra oportunidad y me va a mandar a un group home. Espero salir pronto porque ya me aburri de estar encerrado.

Les recomiendo a los homies que piensen bien lo que hacen. Bueno este vato se retira con respeto y orgullo.

From The Beat: Nos vas a enojar si la llegas a regar. Esta es tú última oportunidad. No la desaproveches. No a todos les dan esta segunda oportunidad. Deberías de estar alegre con la vida por esta nueva oportunidad. Acuerdate cual es el siguiente lugar donde iras si no aprovechas estas.

I'm No Longer Going To CYA

What's up Beat! What's the deal? I'm Diablito. Well, I'm just here, kicking back with the homies. I have some good news. The other day I told y'all that they were going to send me to CYA, but the judge gave me another opportunity and they are not going to send me to CYA. I hope I get out soon because I am fed up with being locked up.

I recommend to all the homies to think very well about what y'all are doing. All right, this dude bids farewell with respect and joy.

-D, 150 Crew

Fro The Beat: You're going to upset us if you mess this opportunity up. This is your last opportunity. Don't let it go to waste. Not everyone is given a second chance. You should be very happy with life because of this new opportunity. Keep in mind what is the following place you will be going to if you don't take advantage of this one.

Tengo Problemas Grande En Mi Hogar

Yo tengo un problema grande con mi papa. Son problemas de hogar. No es porque sea un callejero sino por otros problemas. Mi papa es muy culero con mi jefita. Mi papa se porto bien mal con mi jefita y por eso tubimos un problema muy grande. Lo madre a los hospitales.

Yo juego parte de mi vida porque soy un vendedor de drogas, roba carros y esterios. Y por eso digo que estoy jugando con mi vida. Yo y mis primos jugamos con nuestras vidas. Mi primo Mouse fue el quien me hizo desmadrosa. Cuando estoy afuera soy desmadroso. Me gusta andar loquiando, pero mas me quiero componer un poco. Quiero ser alguién en la vida. Orale, los veo afuera.

From The Beat: Para empezar, si golpiastes a tu padre eso estubo bien mal. Los padres siempre se tienen que respetar sean como sean porque ellos fueron los que nos dieron la vida. Ahora, si creemos que es tiempo que empieces en cambiar algunos aspectos de tu vida. No siempre vas a vivir la misma vida que llebas ahorita. Si sigues en este desmadre no vas a llegar muy lejos. Nunca tendras una familia decente, un trabajo o una educación. Si quieres hacer algo, empieza con cambiar tu forma de ser.

I Have Big Problems At My House

I have a huge problem with my father. They are home –related problems. It is not because I am a street roamer, but because of other problems. My father is an a-hole with my mother. My father behaved very badly with my mother and that's why we had a very big problem. I beat him up to the point that he had to go to the hospital.

I play with a part of my life because I am a drug dealer, I rob cars, and car stereos, and that's why I say I am playing with my life. My cousins and I play with our lives. My cousin, Mouse, is the one who made me a troublemaker. When I am on the outs, I am a hellraiser. I like kicking it out on the streets, but now I want to straighten up a little bit. I want to be someone in life. All right then, I'll see y'all on the outs.

-Lil' Crusito B2

From The Beat: To begin, if you hit your father, that was very bad. (Of course, he should have never hit your mother either because that is just the same sort of disrespect!) You always have to have respect for your parents regardless of how they are because they are the ones who gave us life. Now, we do believe that it is time that you begin to change certain aspects of your life. You're not always going to live the same life that you lead right now. If you continue being involved in this troublemaking lifestyle, you're not going to go far in life. You'll never have a decent life, a job, or an education. If you want to do something, start with changing the way you are.

La Vida Es Hermosa

Sierto, yo pienso que la vida es muy hermosa, pero a la vez triste y dura. La vida te pone pruebas y obstaculos que a huevos tienes que pasar. La verdad nadie se queda sin pasarlos solamente las personas que mueren en el infierno.

From The Beat: Esperamos que cuando salgas disfrutes de lo hermoso que es la vida. ¿Crees que pasaras esa prueba? Tienes que pasarla porque o sino iras al lugar donde todos tememos ir.

Life Is Beautiful

Right, I believe that life is very beautiful, but at the same time, sad and hard. Life places tests and obstacles in your path that with a lot of difficultyyou have to pass. The truth is, no one is left without passing them, just the people that die in hell.

-Cruz, Marin

From The Beat: We hope that when you get out, you enjoy the beauty that is life. Do you believe that you will pass that test? You have to pass it because if you don't, then you'll go to the place we all fear going.

Cuando Era Niño

Me acuerdo que cuando era un niño me gustaba jugar con mi hermanos. Estabamos jugando en mi casa. Cuando vine a este estado, estaba bien, pero cuando conoci a unos me meti en problemas. Empece a usar drogas y a tomar cervezas. Cuando estaba afuera yo era una persona que le gustaba las cervezas. Recuerdo una vez que estaba manejando, tomando chelas en mi coche, fumando un cigarro y no tenía miedo a la policia.

Poco a poco me afecte con las drogas. Recuerdo una vez que me accidente con otro carro. Corri porque tenía miedo y no sabía que iba a venir aqui en esta carcel de Marin.

Esta difícil para mí porque me van a dar siete meses y esos siete meses van a ser largos. No me aguito porque los días se van rapidos.

Cuando salga de aqui, primero voy a dar gracias a Dios y no volver aqui. Ahí nos vemos al rato. Un Saludo a todos los Latinos.

From The Beat: O sea que todo cambio a mal cuando llegastes a este lugar. ¿Cuando va a cambiar a lo normal? Esta experiencia tiene que ayudarte a reflexionar y darte cuenta que lo que estas haciendo es un gran daño a ti mismo. No dejes que las drogas destruya tu vida como lo ha hecho con muchas familias. Si no paras ahora que estas joven va ser muy difícil parar despues. Usa este tiempo para mejorar tu situación de vida porque si no lo haces ahora no lo haras despues. Es mejor antes que tarde.

When I Was A Kid

I remember when I was a kid and I used to play with my brother. We used to play in our house. When I came to this state, everything was fine; but when I met some friends everything went bad. When I was on the outs I was a person who liked beers. I remember one time when I was drinking, drinking beers in my car, smoking a cigarette and I didn't care about the police.

Little by little, I got addicted to drugs. I remember when I had an accident with another car. I ran away because I was scared and I didn't know I was going to end up in Marin juvenile hall.

It's hard for me because they want to give me six months and those months are going to be long. But I try not to get sad because days go by fast.

When I get out of here, God's willing, I'm not coming back here. See you later. My greetings to all Latinos.

-Calixtro Marin

From The Beat: So everything changed from good to bad ever since you're came here. When will it change to normal? This experience has to help you reflect on the things you've done and make you realize that you're hurting yourself. Don't let drugs (including — maybe especially — alcohol) destroy yourself as it has destroyed many families. If you don't stop right now that you're young, it will be harder later. Use this time to better your situation of life before it's too late. It's better now than late.

It's hard for me because they want to give me six months and those months are going to be long. But I try not to get sad because days go by fast.

"Turning Back The Hands Of Time"

From The Beat: This just in... we've finished reading and voting on all of our contest submissions. We took an extra week because the competition was very heavy and we wanted as many people to vote as possible. Though, we wished more people voted (isn't that always the case), we still had a pretty good turn out. And coming around the bend it was neck and neck. We're going to run our winners — the top four out of about 25 submissions.

And if you forgot the topic, here it goes, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story — share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

With that said, here are the elite, the best of the best, the ones we thought went that extra mile. So, without further ado, we bring to you the winners. Drum roll please...

First Place
FRANK RAMOS

San Diego County Jail
San Diego, CA.

The Hands Of Mine
Time — When did it begin? When will it end?
This question, tell me, who can even begin to comprehend?
Who has the power
To add or take away an hour?
A second, a week, or maybe a year?
If you had it, would you abuse it or use it to wipe away some tears?
Or would you fear possible repercussions?
Would you base your decisions on faith? If that's the case, would you leave room for discussion?
If you asked me, I'd probably tell you, "I don't know!"
And ask you, "Who has the answers to the questions that we pose?"
And, as the grains of sands continue o flow...
I dig deep into the prison of my mind, and let some of these captive thoughts go!
One favor I ask; I beg that you listen real close...
For as this intro ends, what begins is a viewing of my soul...

Time, what is time? I guess before any one of us could even consider if we would turn back the hands of time, we would probably want a firm grasp on what it exactly is. Time, a reality wee ponder and contemplate as we drift off to sleep, sometimes wondering if it's a reality at all. But how many of us stay really thinkin' about time? I know as for me — and I'm sure as for a good majority of us — when it comes to death and this thing we call time, as quickly as it crosses our mind is usually as quickly as it exits. Usually without having found any greater understanding or realization of either. It is just way beyond comprehension, the heights, the depths, the width, being unmeasurable, that when we start throwing it around in our limited thinking, we get dizzy, frightened and uncomfortable. And being that we are who we are, we don't like thinkin' about things that make us uncomfortable.

Who has a great grasp on death, on time? Sure, scientists have their theories. And the various religious groups have their beliefs according to their faith. But is she wrong because he's right? Who knows, I mean absolutely knows?

Tell me, do you really think you "want" to know? Would you want to know what becomes of us when death calls our number if it was a state of nothing? Or if we had a sense of consciousness when we passed but no place to go? Just roaming, floating through the afterlife with no rest? For an eternity, with no end? Think of that word: Eternal. We hear it a lot. Always and forever. Are you kidding me? imagine being lost forever, with no end. I'm sorry, but my puny lil' human hands are just a tad small to grasp that one.

I remember in times past when discussing "The end of the world," I used to say the world ends when you die. Sure, life goes on for those living, but your existence ceases to be. Then I would have thought that would be the end of your world. If you don't know of the world, then does it exist to you? Hmmm ...

I'm reminded of the anthropomorphic principle which can be paraphrased as: We see the universe the way it is because we exist." If we knew the answers to these deep questions do you think we would live our lives differently? If we knew for a fact, not just believed or hoped because of our faith, but knew, would that change our way of living?

Let's take Christianity for an example if it was fact that if we didn't believe and repent we would spend an eternity in a lake of fire, in pure anguish forever, wouldn't you think we would believe and repent? Or how 'bout if we knew that when our "Time" was up, it was just a state of nothing. Do you think people would live life moment-to-moment, more savage, more cut throat, with less compassion for others? Only interested in them selves?

As I pose this last question, I myself wonder if it is our belief in time, and whether it ends or not, that dictates our behavior in the here and now.

Life is good, life is bad...
Life is happy, life is sad...
Choices we make, because choices we have...
Imagine if killing was the only choice we had!
If you know the consequences, then how do you expect
To make the decision and not live with the regret?
Circumstances are sometimes out of our hands...
But we do have choices like whether to act like a kid or a man...
W3e didn't choose life, but did life choose us?
If it's chance, who has the hand with the Royal Flush?

I got to fess up, at times my life seems messed up!
Sometimes I wish the Lord would take my burdens and pour me a fresh
cup!
Yeah, I talk to the Lord, but He doesn't answer back...
So ask me why I was molested and
I couldn't answer that!
I ask Him why did He give me a father that didn't care...
When all I needed was love and an ass whoopin' here and there...

Mommy said they'll be days like this
But does that make it fair?
Momma was a rolling stone, standing up to pressure that was hard to
bear!

Sometimes I wonder if it's all just a game
With us being used as the pawns of pain...
But it is what it is, even if it's twisted...
We were given one life to live, how are you going to life it?

I consider myself an optimist, always looking at my cup half full, always finding the positive in the negatives. Some might think that's only because good things happen to me. but anyone who knows Franky knows that's not true. I got problems, sure, albeit, I'll be the first to admit most are caused by my own hands.

Let me talk quickly about some that were not of my choosing, and some that were.

I was born in the late fall of 1977 in a small hospital

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in a small town of Puerto Rico to a beautiful mother with much soul who perhaps f3ell too deeply in love with the wrong man, my father. After much emotional abuse, my mom was finally able to break loose from the dirt bag. But she was young, and at times it was hard for my mom to look after two kids.. so I can't say I had a stable childhood being that I moved around a lot. It's fair to say I've lived in about 12 different cities before the age of 16, ranging from New York to Georgia, Virginia, P.R., an' back to what I call the hometown — North America's finest city!

At a young age, I was molested by a neighbor in Puerto Rico, only to grow a lil' in stature and older in age to get touched again! Only this time by a female cousin. I guess you could say she was freak! And later again by my mom's friend.

At night I can' sleep
I toss and turn…
Dreaming about finger tips
About finger tips that burn!
They don't work for AT&T
But they reached out and touched me…
Thank God there was no intercourse…
But they sure did screw me.
Get it? Got it? Good!…
At least one of us ain't misunderstood!

I believe — and this being only my opinion — that my punk-ass father ruined my mom emotionally. So when my mom took me and my sister back, she really didn't stay with one man for more than a few years. So father figures came and went in my life. My mom tried and, God bless her soul, in no way would I tell this story with intentions of speakin' ill. But my life is non-fiction, and I speak real, so I can deal. Dig it?

It was my mom, my sister who is three years older, and myself. My mom liked to party a lot when she was younger, and she used to come home an' flip out on us. I used to find things in her purse that lil' boys didn't want to find in their mommy's purse. My mom kept a roof over our heads and food on the table. And she did love us. But one thing that messed me up is that she was real tight with my sister and they would shop all the time while I hardly got a crumb thrown my way.

And then I got older. And we must all understand that I am a special person and I was a handful as a kid. I needed special care, discipline and love.

My sister, being on her own trip as well as my mom, I started hangin' with the fellows on the block. And I started getting into trouble. Sure, my mom tried, but I was just too much, and she wasn't capable on her own to rear a kid such as myself. So then began the cycle: drugs, juvie, then prison six times!

I met my father a few times, and I must say they were all negative experiences. Do I hate him? No, hate is a strong word and it's an emotion that I don't feel. But I didn't like him. And if I was a type to seek out blame, I'd put it on him. He passed away in 2002 and I didn't cry. But I was sad, sad that I couldn't introduce him to my lovely wife and show him how a woman is supposed to be happy. And I was sad that I couldn't show him how a man, a father, and a husband was supposed to be. But it wasn't a loss, for you can't lose what you never had.

But I'll tell you what really makes me sad. I didn't like him for the things he didn't do, and the things he did. And I used to talk a whole lot of shhh about him. But today, some will say I am no better than him, somehow, being like him and doing the things that hurt me to other people, and that saddens me.

But that is life. And sure, I didn't choose who my father was. And sure, I can have strong addictions and strong personality traits passed down. But I am not a robot, and I have a choice of who I want to be.

And that brings us to the question that has brought us here today. A choice — would I turn back the hands of time or wouldn't I? Why? That is the question!

I look back on my life, and sure, there's been pain, hurt, and regrets. Oh yeah, a whole lot of regrets. But I realize, it's the worst hurt, pain, etc. etc. because it's my own. But like I said before, I look on the bright side of things and it's really not all that bad. When I start to cry and complain, I think of young infants born with AIDS. I think of people born into oppression, into slavery. I think of people born into war. And I say to myself, "How dare I complain! Who in the hell do I think I am!" And I rejoice in my blessings and mourn in other people's curses.

As soon as I read the question to the topic, I immediately came up with my answer: No! I would not turn back the hands time.

People, this is life. And with life comes hurt, death, pain, joy, rain. That is just something that we must deal with as long as we know our time on Earth.

I write this from prison. I mentioned early my lovely wife. Well, with that beautiful person I had a gorgeous, special lil' girl. Right now, my wife is talking to a lawyer and she is filing for divorce. She pretty much hates me and wants nothing to do with me because I haven't been a man, and because I didn't value her. I can't blame her, and God knows how I love that woman.

But it is what it is. I thought about turning back the hands from sparing her from my existence, from the hurt and pain she experienced because of me. I thought of turning back he hands from sparing my family from any and all hurt I have caused them.

But the reason the answer of "No" came so quickly is because of my lil' girl. Her angelic face manifested itself in my mind like a portrait painted by the Hand of God. She is alive and healthy. Sure, I'm not there, but thank God I get out soon and I have choices.

We have seen on TV shows and movies where they go back in time and change something, only to set off a future of events affecting a whole lot more than they wanted. I would not dare take that chance. I have met and was blessed to be with the most special woman on this Earth. And she gave me an Angel from Heaven. I am so sorry for the hurt I've caused her, but have a thing called faith. And my faith says that I might not understand, but everything has happened for a reason. My faith has me believing in fate. So it would be useless to turn back the hands, for in the end it would end the same. I didn't choose some of the things that happened, but I wouldn't change them if I could, for I believe God did choose them. And I believe everything that has happened has happened for a greater purpose than what my humble mind can comprehend.

So I'll leave the past where it's at, and thank the Lord for the present, for it is a gift. And I'll put my faith in a better way, hopin' for a better day… tomorrow.

At first I thought I was cursed
Until "My Life" showed me her worth…
"My Life" being my daughter,
Mireya Vida Ramos
This is dedicated to you

I think of people born into oppression, into slavery. I think of people born into war. And I say to myself, "How dare I complain! Who in the hell do I think I am!"

Second Place

WILLIAM GRAJEDA
Alameda County Jail (Santa Rita)

If I Could Turn Back the Hands Of Time

If I could turn back the hands of time,
There would be no tears for my my momma to cry,
No pain to feel, no anger to subside,
No need to try,
Broken hearts to mend,
Shattered bonds left to loose ends,
Unspoken love lost on silent winds;
Apologies, endearments, hopes too late to give
Because time, fate, distance have become forfeit by separations hand…

If I could turn back the hands of time,
Bouquets of flowers, over cooked steaks, a fresh Cadillac
gifts of "Cool Waters" long walks everywhere;
"momma I love you always," no worries of despair,
Queen of my heart,
All of your sons adore you with an unconditional love,
Your beauty will infinitely be our guide through the dark,
You're the best momma, I'll always love you with all my heart.
If I could turn back the hands of time…

If I could turn back the hands of time,
Ashes over the Bay Bridge,
There would be a gravestone to share a drink with,
No feria (money), cuetes (guns), y balas (and bullets) to pass;
Puro bisio (bad habits), llerva (Marijuana), y rolas (songs) to blast… Oldies but goodies in our ranfla (car),
The escorts, dramatics in the back:
"give a saldo," life is firme when our shades lean back low to the side…
If I could turn back the hands of time…

If I could turn back the hands of time,
Stop the clock, hold the glock, no raided spots, worryin' on the drop,
No points on the block, no bird chirpin' up top, him, her, moms, pops, homies, who…can you hear pop, pop, pop,
The sound of the one time outside creepin' to a halt!
No more juvenile hall pit stops,
Camp dorm visits, half way house, group home temp spots,
CYA stints, futures planned for long prison trips
Or another body bag with our street nametag already waitin' for you in it…

No more, no more, if I could turn back the hands of time,
Let me save someone that I love,
Stop death from knockin' on the door,
I'd stand guard in front,
Make sure that dark shadow passed us by.
No more tears left on an empty plot,
No eternal pain in my heart beats clock
Time wouldn't stop, I wouldn't be half dead
We would still be livin- it up with many more cinnamon rolls,
Bar-B-Q's; Coronas and taco truck visits up ahead!..

If I could turn back the hands of time,
There wouldn't be no busted caps,
No shootin' craps,
No Hidden stash, no fast need to dash, crash,
Or hit the brakes on the gas, and certainly no K-9 whiplash…

If I could turn back the hands of time,
Only peace and harmony,
a game of fun, candy for everyone, no need to fear;
Wine spills instead of bloodstains,
No emergency hospital room visits or shattered mirrors,
Only carnival rides, corn dogs, pink popcorn,
Cotton candy surprise and the sweet flavors of Cali(fornia)
Orange and purples for you and thee…
If I could turn back the hands of time..

If I could turn back the hands of time,
"I can't wait," "it's too long," "I'm sorry baby," "I still love you,"
False time, a façade, a lie, it can't be real,
"It's only time after all…what we had was stronger than a clock,
I thought, look down a desert highway, "how does it make you feel?" Nothing seems certain or for real…
Mirages upon mirages, "how many rest stops will there be?
I'm sorry babygirl,
But I told you there's no smooth ride without some bumbs in the roads…
Life doesn't cruise that way,
Time, life, love isn't measured by a thousand nights
Or "how many days"
If I could turn back the hands of time…

If I could turn back the hands of time
There wouldn't be a need to cop any bricks to flip,
Birds to fly, points to measure, or zips
To waste on those two way tips
Eyes been trippin' for a week on some blue tinted madness,
Pass the swisher for
The purp-sleep is what I need to get back to reality, no more,
If I could turn back the hands of time…"

If I could turn back the hands of time,
no more tears lost in puddles of spilled milk,
No more broken hearts imprisoned by guilt,
No ears deaf to the untimely slain, the lost, the confused,
The abandoned, the bruised…
To all that were born on the sidewalks of ghetto streets,
Into a world of desperations and struggle
"our" realities and truths are the foundations that you see
At the dead ends of poverty's front; trust and believe

If I could turn back the hands of time,
There would only be tears of joy, bundles of love,
Cup cakes and ice cream, melodies of fun,
Songs of happiness, cheers of laughter, funs of hugs,
Kindness in tons, peace without any ends..,
Chocolate bars, soda pop, doughnut shops,
Sour powers and unconditional love for everyone…
If I could turn back the hands of time…"

If I could turn back the hands of time,
"If…"
"If only if…"
"Only if I could…"
I'm reminded of "if" as that paradox of truth:
"What's too late for me now, is not too late for you!
"If it wasn't too late. I would"
But you young juveniles, you young adults still could…
You are the wishes, you are the hopes…
If the "if onlys" are to ever come true then it must start with you!
"If only's' are too late for the ghetto street hearts like mine and many…
Our truths and realities have become burned to deeply within our souls, But you young juveniles and young street g's are still our hopes to make those "if onlys" come true…
Take heed my ghetto street youth,
'Cause we are your living examples of that hard reality and the cold prison truths
That lay in your future if you follow me…
"If only maybe too late for me, but it's never too late for you!
If only I could go into the future of time,
I would fix it so that all of you would make our "if onlys" come true.

Third Place

RAY SANCHEZ JR.
Pleasant Valley State Prison

Changing My Past

What would I do if I could turn the clock back? Would I go back to improve my current conditions, or would I go back to plot my schemes more efficiently? Would I hide my dope better? Not trust this person or take a pistol to that person? How would I change my past? How would I change my past? How would I affect my future? Before, I could see how I would leap at the opportunity to abuse this ability, manipulating time for my own self fish reasons. Now? I don't know. What would I change for the better.

Since my prison sentence I've constantly wondered what would I change. I often thought about my older brother, Angelo. How I would save him, beg him to go home, leave the park with me instead of hang with the homies while I play in the jungle gyms and slides? He never would have been shot if I did. I would have someone to look up to. I would have a trailblazer to show me what works and what doesn't. I wouldn't be bumping along blindly as I felt my way through life. I would have a brother to share my joys and pains with.

But I wouldn't stop there. I'd stop myself from stealing that first roach from my dad's ashtray. Stop from drinking that first beer. Do what ever it took to prevent myself from picking up that first gun. I would do so much to end my future suffering and causing pain in others. I don't even know how many people I've hurt over the years. I've lost track somewhere along the way. I've lost so much due to gangs, drugs, and envy. Like the awestruck wonder I'd feel when pops would take me and my brothers to the aquarium, or the Lawrence Hall of Sciences in Frisco. I lost the belief that my father was indestructible. That he'd always be there for us. I lost my innocence and imagination to reality's brutal attacks. I no longer believe in Santa Clause, or believe only bad people get punished. I don't believe we are as equal as the constitution says we are. I don't believe peace exists anywhere on earth. I've lost these beliefs. I've lost them and I want them back. I would make the changes necessary to reinstall these beliefs just to prove myself that it can be done. So I know my own child won't become as disillusioned as I have.

I would sit down with my father, show him the man I've become, and beg him to take better care of his health. I would tell him how much his family needs him, the foundation on which our house is built. I would go back to wipe away my mothers tears s my father was hauled off to prison. I would talk to myself. I would tell myself that it's okay to be scared. That I don't have to fight. That the other kids aren't better just because they have new clothes and toys. I would remove the seeds of frustration I got when I was made fun of for wearing hand me downs. I would ease out the hate I developed after I was jumped just for living on my side of Daly City. I would wipe out the smug satisfaction I got when I first sold drugs and came to school with new gear. I would eradicate the pride I had in my gang, my colors, every time I flamed up and put it down. I would go back to every key point in my life to bring these feelings to light, to show myself how they are wrong. To guide myself back on the right path.

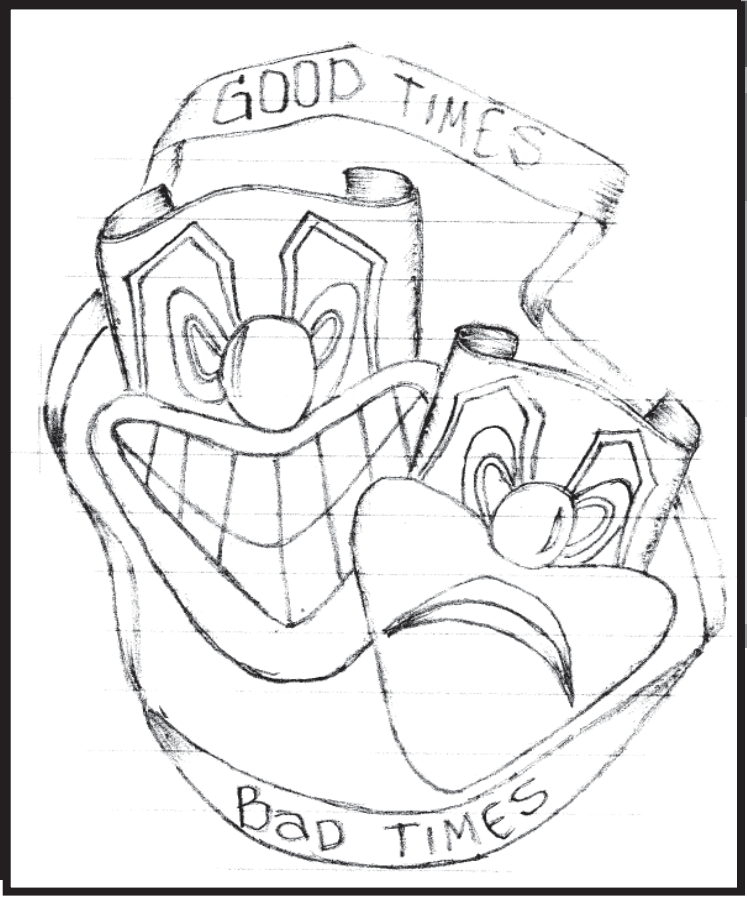
And with all these changes, my life would be easier, better. I wouldn't be an addict. I wouldn't need alcohol to survive the hard times. My brother would still be here tot be my best friend. My father wouldn't be dying now. My education would have been second to no other aspect of my life and I would be a man to make my family proud, instead of being the son in prison who is remembered at the family gatherings he can never attend. I would be there to kiss my daughters boo-boos better and hold my wife in my arms. I would be proud, not because I rode like a sav for my side, but because I endured hardships and still prospered. Because I would be able to give back to the family who has given me so much.

I would never see a jail cell. I would never know the horrors of the thug life I've lived for so long. I would be a different man than I am now. But is that what I truly want?

Some people think you are just a collection of your live's experiences. I believe you are what you choose to do with those experiences. Would I be a empathetic, to others' pain as I am no if I changed my past? I somehow doubt it. My political views would be different. I may be a right winged republican instead of a right wing democrat. I may be a three strike proponent seeing as how I would never of seen the first hand effects that law has had on our society. I may have no pity for gang-bangers or criminals who receive ridiculous life sentences. My morals would be different because my experiences would have been different.

In order to serve the world, Jesus became a servant to all. In order to understand the pains of society's unwanted, I too, had to suffer and become unwanted. I am trying to bring about a program that will allow inmates to donate blood and have marrow to children's hospitals that specialize in fighting cancer. Would I do this if my father didn't have cancer himself? Not likely. I advocate rehabilitation over punishment for those who suffer drug addictions. Would I do so if I myself didn't experience my own addictions? I don't think so. I write to the Beat Within with the hope that I can help change the lives of those who deal with dope, guns, greed, sex, and hate every day they're on the streets. Would this be so if I did not deal with the same shhh myself? Never.

Yes, I've been through a lot, and could make many changes to avoid the pains I've survived, but I wouldn't be me anymore. I wouldn't care for you as I do now. And it's because of that and that alone that I would gladly suffer the traumas of my life. For the very hope that I could change your life for the better, I would change nothing about mine.



Fourth Place

ISRAEL PEREZ
Salinas Valley State Prison

Reborn, So To Speak... Not!

Marcus Aurelius once wrote that, "In the life of a man, his time is but a moment, his being an incessant flux, his sense a dim rushlight, his body a prey of worms, his soul an unquiet eddy, his fortune dark, his fame doubtful. In short, all that is body is as coursing waters, all that is of the soul as dreams and vapors."

I would like to think that Marcus Aurelius' dreary observation of a man's life somehow stemmed from h is own dark experiences on this strange thing called life. That hopefully he was suffering from some rare form of tortured depression, or maybe even a bout of fitful paranoia when he penned it. I would like to imagine that there is more to man than such a bleak existence. That through all flesh is "prey of worms," the soul, if properly gardened, will one day be unleashed to travel all the universe — both known and unknown.

Maybe it's just the eternal child in me, but I wish to believe in that pot of gold at the end of each rainbow. I want to think my fortune — whether good or bad — is due to that omnipotent God watching over me from the Heavens. Yet, in the deepest depths of my vaporous soul, I fear Aurelius' description of man's life is al too true.

After all, all one need do is make an amateurish study of man's history, to realize that the world of man is quite dark indeed. Take a brief, yet penetrating look around oneself, and the muddled mess that mankind is mired in becomes all too apparent. Only then does the offal stench of man's state hit one squarely in the face, making one unable to imagine anything positive for the soul.

I guess if I were to truly allow my deepest fears to ebb toward the surface, I would have to admit I no longer believe that good somehow always overcomes evil. That those who willingly choose to take up swords for the army of evil, also choose the losing side of a war. I guess one can say, I no longer believe in fairytales. And while my deepest fears are so near the surface, I might as well admit, I suspect my fellow man believes as I do as well... I pray not.

Almost with a desperate need to find a extra bit of alertness, I brought the brown plastic prison cup to my lips, and finished off what remained of my morning coffee. And though the black liquid had grown cold since I first poured it from my hot pot, it still felt invigorating as it entered my system. Turning to rinse my mouth in the sink, I touched my lips to the nearly ice-cold stream of water that flowed readily from every Mule Creek State Prison faucet. Mentally reminding myself to drink more fluids throughout the day, I almost choked on something humorous Kelly Rippa said to Regis. Feeling that that was enough TV for the morning, I pushed play on the CD player after locating 50 Cents' "Many Men."

After listening to that particular track several times, I began to wonder what was holding up the daily program. And just as I checked my watch to confirm my suspicions, the CO in the control tower announced the morning yard release. Thinking it was about that time, I took my gray baseball cap from its hook (a paperclip I had glued to the wall), and set it just barely on the top of my bald head, in the drill sergeant fashion. Pulling the cap's crisp brim down low over my eyes, I stood at my cell door ready to go outside for yard.

Looking out at the building's "dayroom," the early morning sun spilled warmly in through the six windows high up along the wall. I could tell the weather was going to produce one of those days I lived for, so my anxiousness caused me to grow a tad impatient. And it was this anxiousness that caused me to track the "floor cop" as he made his rounds along the horseshoe-shaped second tier. Watching him give the okay signal to the CO in the control tower to "pop" certain cell doors, it felt like he would never reach my own. And it was at that moment when my ex-cellmate's warning to be extra cautious in the coming weeks flashed across my mind. But feeling it was going to be too nice a day, I forced all negative thoughts to the side. And when at last the CO stood outside my cell, his arm raised giving the okay signal, I hit the tier like a racehorse out of his stall.

Moving down the tier at a brisk pace, I deftly maneuvered around other prisoners who were also exiting their cells. I didn't bother stopping to speak with anybody the way others often do, but instead left behind me a trail of courteous "excuse me"s or "all right now"s to those I was familiar with. And it was those I'd become familiar with that I found contentment with most recently. For they had come to view me as honest, straightforward, understanding, intelligent, and all in the short period of the two and a half months I had been in Mule Creek.

But out of al the qualities my fellow inmates came to see in me, the non-violent one was the one I took the most pride in. I guess you could say this is due to my strong desire to shed an old skin. To be reborn, so to speak. For if it's one thing I wish to obtain before I either parole or expel my last breath, it's the mentality and behavior of an average citizen who has never known an hour of incarceration. Yes, I would one day like to speak like a normal person once more, walk like a normal person, think like a normal person — man, I so desperately need to feel like a normal person again.

It was in this frame of mind I reached the metal staircase which would have carried me down and out to the prison yard. Yet, it wasn't so much the outside yard that I sought, but rather the quarter mile track which encircled it. Because it was on that track where I either walked the morning away in deep thought, or held decent conversations with whatever company I picked up along the way.

So, when I felt the first violent hit to my face, before I could even take a single step, it found me a little unprepared. And it wasn't 'til my cap fell off and the second hit caught me on the forehead, that my mind fully registered I was being attacked. Without really needing to tell my body what action to take, I instinctively took my assailant down to the unforgiving concrete. And with the panic that overcomes someone who finds themselves on their back with their opponent on top of them, my attacker pulled my gray thermal shirt over my head, Then it was my turn to experience a tinge of panic as my world was cast into darkness. However, with lightning reflexes that surprised even me, I came out of the thermal shirt completely. Once free of the cumbersome garment, I felt my fists curl into tight rock-like masses. Unable to stop myself, I felt my shoulder spring forward with the white-knuckled fist it had cocked back. The blow that followed was a devastating one. Immediately, I felt the solid contact travel up my arm. Instantly, I knew my attacker's nose had been left crushed in the aftermath. And the sound of solid flesh violently impacting solid flesh echoed in my ears.

But these horrible things did not give me pause as it would a normal citizen of the world. I did not halt in worry that I had wounded severely another human being. No, instead, this horrible sound and feeling produced the opposite reaction in me. they were like a prey's sudden movement at escape, catching the eye of a predator. Automatically, they triggered something deeply imbedded with me — attack, pounce, give chase!

The violent monster CDC (California Department of Corrections) had created in me, then teased, tortured, and tormented for the last sixteen years, once again reared its grotesque head. With a savagery that is not initially present at the birth of a boy child, I began to pummel my attacker-turned-victim. And with each blow that was delivered with devastating impact, the monster with grew more excited. It did not matter that my inner voice was screaming for me to stop. It mattered little that some of my new non-violent friends were seeing me in a light I hoped them never to see me in, full of vicious violence. Even worse, I shuddered at the sight I knew I made before them, covered in another man's blood, and getting bloodier by the second...

"Get down! Get the fuck down!" was the shouted command that finally broke through my combat-focused concentration. And like every time I've heard these words yelled, the bellower's voice was heavy with fear, nervousness, shock and excitement. But surprisingly, unlike previous incidents, this barked command was not followed by the painful bite of a metal baton, the suffocating burn of O.C. Pepper Spray, nor the frightful impact of a 40 mm rubber bullet that always made me think I'd been shot by the guard's mini 14 rifle for a split second.

With a long-practiced calm, which visibly unnerved the yelling C.O., I slowly walked away from the bloody scene my attacker lay prone in. Careful not to turn my back on my former adversary, nor the approaching CO with baton at the ready. I slowly lowered myself into the prone position. Allowing the cold handcuffs to be placed on my wrists, the feeling of defeat quickly engulfed me. the sickly scent of blood was all about me, and I became conscious of its stickiness between my fingers. It was then I understood a major battle was lost in my heart. It was then I felt disgusted at my inability to deny the prison monster within. I knew I had failed. And failed miserably at that.

I guess if I had the power to turn back the hands of time, would choose to go back to that particular morning. I wouldn't dare think of going any farther than that, for it would only be upsetting other's lives for my own selfishness, and I'm pretty tired of being selfish.

So, no, I'd just go back to that morning. But instead of stepping out my cell, I would kick off my shoes and climb into bed. Of course, I fully comprehend my attacker would just be waiting there for me the following day. And, of course, I'd still end up with a couple puncture scars to add to the collection. But at least... well, at least I'd have another twenty-four hours of imagining I was once again a normal human being.

(Dedicated to D.J. Though your "Heads up" proved useless, it still means a lot. Good lookin' cookin'.)

Sorry Mama

Chorus: I said I'm sorry mama, I never meant to stress you,
Never meant to put you through all the hectic things I done put you through
I know it ain't right but I'm speaking nothing but the truth...

Forgive me for all the hectic shhh I did
I been roaming the streets since I was just a little kid
I was just an infant, when I was brought in the game
Exposed early to life, to money, drugs, and gangs
I was 9 years old, when I first got locked down
You was there for me, holding me down
And when you wasn't, Nana was there taking your place
That's why when she died, all my love turned to hate
I thank you, for all the love that you shared
All the kisses and hugs as a kid, shown me you cared
We was never rich, we grew up poor and broke
Drama in the house everyday, man that shhh was no joke
That still ain't a reason, to come to jail and stress you out
That's why I say mama,
Listen to the words that's coming out of my mouth
I SAID I'M SORRY...

Chorus: I said I'm sorry mama, I never meant to stress you,
Never meant to put you through all the hectic things I done put you through
I know it aint right but I'm speaking nothing but the truth...

Pops was never there for us, he was always gone
Either in prison, doped out, or he was running his own
Me and Anthony, yeah, we was bad as hell
Roaming the streets at all hours, making the neighbors mad as hell
I know it was stressful, to see all your kids fade away
Just remember, mama, in our hearts you will forever stay
That ain't no lie, that's coming from between my lips
You was stressing the most, when I was sentenced to prison reality hit
That ate me up inside, tore my heart out my chest
It made me want to give up, and say forget the rest...

Chorus: I said I'm sorry mama, I never meant to stress you,
Never meant to put you through all the hectic things I done put you through
I know it aint right but I'm speaking nothing but the truth...!
I said I'm sorry!

That ain't no lie, that's coming from between my lips
You was stressin' the most, when I was sentenced to prison reality hit
That ate me up inside, tore my heart out my chest
It made me want to give up, and say forget the rest...

CHRIS GRAJEDA

We first met this next lyricist in 150 (Alameda County Juvenile Hall) and over the last few years we've watched him grow up. Though, like with the rest of us, there are some ways in which he might have room for improvements, no one can deny the obvious maturity in him. Now, writing from Preston, a Youth Authority (CYA) Institution in Ione, CA, on the lockdown hall Ironwood. He has plenty of time to think and that he does in these next three masterpieces. The first, 'Kickin' Back,' is sort of a reflection of this young man's thoughts as he sits and just kicks back on the bed in his cell. His second piece is a rap to his mama that shows his maturity as a young man. We hope she gets to read it. Then he concludes with a piece that we think says it all. For though 'reality' ends up slapping him in the face and telling him to come back whenever he tries to do the right thing, we know that 'his reality' is only what he makes it — sort of like the rest of us. We're glad to hear from him because we miss his challenging ideas in our workshops. Keep your head up, you know you've always got a place here at The Beat.

Twisted Reality

I sit back and ponder how twisted life can be
Or I think can it just be me
It could be you too
If you sit back and look at life's perspectives the way that I do
I sit back in CYA 23-1 lock down
I just caught extra time but I'm still down
I'm still going to ride for what I believe in
Posted in a lonely cell never going to break or bend
I'm going on my third year of incarceration
I try to stay focused and not lose my concentration
It's twisted reality that I'm steady facing
It seems like it's the system that I'm always free basing
The government is twisted trying to throw all the minorities in jail
The way the system's built it's only the strong that prevail
I always seen it this way
They keep us locked up so they can get paid
Make dollars off our physical presence
They think in their mind we're nothing but peasants
It's all-good I could take what they dish
This shhh ain't new I aint no new booty fish
I been ridin', I been doing this shhh
But when I try to do right reality is there to slap me in my face
To tell me back the hell up and stay in my place
That's why I trip how twisted life is
The way the world works and does it's bizz
It tells me to wake the hell up
You're facing your own twisted reality!

Kickin' Back

I kick back on my bed in my cell
23 hours locked up a day, it feels like hell
Ain't no love from between these walls
That's why I keep my head up and refuse to fall
I crave for the comfort of a sexy female
The life I live I guess you could call it a gangsta's fairy tale
Most people can't endure the pain I've been takin'
They look at me and say "He coo'", but they're deeply mistakin'
The world's full of twisted ass politics
Sometimes when I think about them they make me sick
Government always trying to push their damn authority
It seems all they accomplish is locking up minorities
Al Capone, Bugsy Seigal and even Bill Clinton I wouldn't mind to imitate
They kept it gangsta plus their priorities were straight
Most people look at life through sugar-coated lenses
Wake the hell up,
life ain't about mansions, casinos, BMW's, and Benzes
It's me against the world in our own personal dual
Life is twisted and our system's ruthless and cruel
These are just some thoughts that I want to float in your head
They float in mine... in my cell kickin' back on my bed!

JEREMY TOWNER ***This next writer's 'random thoughts' are better than most consistent thoughts we've heard. He's truly making a name for himself here at The Beat Within, as we get mail from him every week — sometimes two or three times. But it's stuff we love reading. Just recently we published the first four chapters of his autobiography, 'Con-flicted' and we're still waiting for the rest. This week we have to settle (settling with this next writer is not a bad thing at all) for a few pieces of wisdom and some real live thoughts from a man who's serving 65 to life at the age of 24. It's a trip hearing ideas from a perspective of someone who may never see the outside again. The hope for something greater is still there, but the distraction of thoughts is to a point where one could have time to not only sort out their thoughts, but also analyze them and express them the way he does. Writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, Jeremy is really present here in our office. We talk about him each week and still wonder what's up with the rest of those chapters. Let's go Jeremy, we're waiting. Oh by the way, Jeremy was a primetime Beat contributor back in the day when he was a young detainee fighting for his life from Santa Cruz County Juvenile Hall.***

My Last Wish

For now all I have to do is wait
As time drags longer that I can see
And if I should die in this fate
Then plant me with the seed of a tree
Then if the gods grant me my wish
And let me live beyond my years
Growing forever in heavenly mist
Living off of the angel's tears
That I may live to see the world
And the whole it was meant to be
For now all I have to do is wish
For await to be set free

Random Wisdom

Everyday I need to do something. Being a lifer at such a young age had tormented me in my sleep. I can't dream anymore at night so in the day I dream. I read to take a walk from my life but when the book is done I'm filled with sorrow. Sorrow rooted so deep in my mind. It's frustrating to contain. I can't imagine a life on the streets anymore and have forced myself to accept my fate. Some say its giving up only because there's nothing in it that they can see that would benefit them in doing their own time. But I've found something a lot of men never want. The truth.

The truth is what I've done or any man has done in prison was wrong. No matter how soft they try to explain why it was done it is still wrong. Truth is most bitter when spoken.

And so after facing this truth I now can live. Still with no dreams only books. And this pen.

Don't lose your dreams out of anger or frustration. If something seems wrong, then it's wrong. Take that feeling as a hint from god to walk the other way.

To All 'The Beat' Readers

I am a lifer. To be more exact I have 65 to life. But I'm only 24. I was arrested when I was 16 and it feels like I haven't aged a bit. I think that's because time has no more meaning to my life because I have no life.

Funny thing is I'm not a gang member, drug dealer, purse-snatcher, homicidal maniac who likes to steal. I'm a man who knew what was going on just like the rest of you. That's right, I'm just another guy— another number to the world. And when I die my name will forever be forgotten, or remembered in shame and disgrace, and no one will revive my spirit because nobody wants to learn from an idiot.

During my time I tried to fight the law. I blamed my sentencing on everything that I could possibly get away with. Then my heart spoke to me and you know what it said? It said, "You have no one to blame but yourself. So if you ever decide to take responsibility for what you have done now would be your last chance."

My last chance is all prison is. It's the chance right before death that let's you go the other way. All my life I've been given chances but they were dully ignored. But there's just something in the last chance that tempted me to accept and correct what, for years, people have been trying to tell me not to do.

It took a long time but now that I have lost my life a long time has no meaning.

For God's sake as well as your own, think about your future. Think about your life, because Al Capone's only happened in the past. There are no more top dogs. Only foolish men who have more bark than bite. Prison is not a lifestyle. It's a waiting situation to the after life. Find yourself and fast.

The Endeavor Of A Lifetime

As I reluctantly put back together the shards of my shattered life I bleed away any chance of redemption to live again. But with the scars of memory I paste this waste of flesh with a spirit of foreign wisdom never known to me before.

My mind trapped forever in a torrent of decisions. My spirit tested. But within I hold the answers of what is righteous and what's iniquity. It is the making of what I want to be that let's me decide what I need to do. That path that I then tread upon with worn feet and a tired body let's me see what is around me. In the distance of my life I see the gates of heaven. How so far off they seem. How small the path is to get there. How broken I have become by the many shocks of realization that the world could be so cruel and that I alone could contribute my anger and chaos to what is already destroyed by years of ignorance. Stacked on top of each other like thick layers of earth eventually hiding the true past that holds the secrets of my future.

But I walk upon the stones of the drugs, violence, useless sex, theft, murder, rage, hatred, jealousy, blindness, impatience, and I stumble. I fall upon these stones with trust that they will not hurt me. That they will lead me to my dreams.

But when I finally do hit them I become broken. My soul becomes as shattered as a mirror on the floor. Holding a million reflections of who I am. There is nothing more to do but put myself back to what I could be. Cast these stones from my path and continue my journey wrought with peril and uncertainty. To strive forevermore to see beyond the horizon of my existence while I follow the sun over the precipice beyond the stars of heaven.

Walk on lonely sound for the angel's call. Walk on. Listen to your heart for it is your companion on your quests. Live to see the wonders of all that contains beauty and perfection for these are for you to see.
God Bless and God speed.

JEREMY TOWNER (CONT.)

Random Thoughts

I have always been listless about my life. Willy here, nilly there. And how the literacy of my expression will be short coming it's the understanding of what needs to be understood. Not by the reader but by the author.

Carelessness. This is the laziness of mankind. Along with it comes personal gain because you'll only care if there's something in it for you. That is greed. If everyone was greedy, there'd be nothing more to hold.

That's what distinguishes you, the nobility, from the ignorant. You will stand out like golden sunsets if you can break free of your ignorance and embrace your nobility.

A true king will listen and practice advice. He will take the good and discard the bad. No matter how small evil deeds may seem they are still evil. And are to be tossed away from you. If you dig a pit to trap an innocent man beware that you don't fall in the pit yourself. God is watching at all times. So are your family members who have passed on. Remember that when you are tempted to mess up again.

A Piece Of Wisdom

Dreams. Dreams are the hopes and wishes of each of our desires. We dream not of something worse but always of something better. We dream ourselves in a life we wish to be in and yet the dream ends when we doubt the ability to achieve our dreams. Such a stumbling stone that is rooted in our path. Worn smooth the stone is from the millions of dreamers who have caught their feet upon its massive size. And yet as some fall in doubt they can look up in life and see those who have dreamed step over this stone. Not with ease but with careful consideration as to where to step among the way so they can reach their dreams.

You see no dream is unattainable in life but is only cut short by doubt that we can only be as we are. To break free of this stone one must break free from his old life and begin upon his dreams. As a wise man once said "The journey of a thousand miles beings with the first step," take that step and you're on your way.

Nevertheless, if you must hear, sit with me, My Brother, I have much to tell you of this thing I humbly call Thee Cubed Abyss and it's darkness . . .

THEE MOUSEMAN

A fairly new writer to The Beat (his first piece for us was earlier this year), but an O.G. as far as life goes. One of our eldest contributors with a whole lot on his mind. This week he comes at us with a deep piece about the routine of being incarcerated. And to the untrained eye, this piece may be a little confusing, but here at The Beat we have people from all walks of life, so we don't have a problem deciphering it. Besides, he's quickly becoming one of our favorite writers, so this is our desperate attempt to keep him happy. He's sending his wisdom from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA, and it's always welcome here. As a matter of fact, we're going to close this intro so we can check the mail and see if we have anything else from him. Thank you for giving us a piece of yourself as we patiently wait for more.

The Agony Of Ritual Within Thee Cubed Abyss

As the veil approaches, darkness cascades through Thee Cubes Abyss. "The Agony of Ritual Begins."

Aged flesh is pressed firmly against Thee Abyss, tension is released. Once again, there is no deliverance for he who has waited much too long.

Somewhere within a weary spirit an echoed voice is heard. The same declarative message heard for what has become eons. "Foolish boy, you have squandered your youth!"

Thee heart plunges toward unimaginable depth as an ache pulses throughout this exhaust cadaver — a torment greater than thee night before, yet never greater than thee approaching night. What cursed soul is keeper of such anguish and from what phantom corner of Thee Cubed Abyss does this beast hope arise? Memoirs chain skin to what was, persecute my memories, tussle as I might, Thee Abyss givith no quarter to innocents gone bad.

Advance, rise up and be. Or be vanquished as so many a man had in ages past. Fall not deeper into slumber. Brother try as you might, screams, cries or whimpers. I hear you no more, you have given away your chance, your dreams have become another's. Gone, but not forgotten, still you are a memory skipping through my mind, farewell brother, I have a grip on this flame, none steals fire!

To simply hide from reality is no honorable task. People of this mortal land do so on a faithful basis. I, loathing defeat, resign to no one or thing. I dislike being second best on any stage. I can stand thee pangs of all without plea or request. Suffer very well I can. Want or wish to suffer. Nay!

I have always thought myself better suited to accomplish goals in this realm than those I am affiliated with. I trust this being nothing more than self-respect. I refuse to let thee oppressor's boot dictate who or what I shall become. Being at thee inner gates of pandemonium allows the spirit to dream and act as well. Nothing less than true courage in Thee Abyss would give birth to an endless night of shame, from which no man would return.

I refuse to come before Thee Creator of All with a sack of half-hearted attempts. No futile remnants of what could have been. No quaint terms that rallied masses to cheer on a fool in a parade of lesser fools!

Gravity is GOD, leaving one fatigued, tasked with daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, decade after decade to arise from thee cadaver's slab. Speak not of Thee Agony of Ritual, there sits no exhausted individual, sometimes thee journey can be mortifying.

Parculers are put to me how does one survive such a prolonged instance? I propose these questions are for someone you adore or have feelings for, I am saddened to proclaim. There is given solution or salvation for surviving Thee Abyss.

Not all riders will weather this storm. Not all will choose a sure-footed mount, some shall not be afforded an opportunity or chance to learn of Thee Abyss. They shall become thee lesson, as so many others have and so many more shall be. I speak no life, Thee Abyss shall consume another brother, insurmountable existence within Thee Bell of Thee Cubed Abyss is normal

One must battle Thee Cubed Abyss, not merely be advised by another, while I do battle for taking spirits not belonging to me, your loved one may do battle for other reason peculiar to them. Echoes hears in Thee Abyss will tell us contrasting things, such is the reverberation with Thee Abyss.

Nevertheless, if you must hear, sit with me, My Brother, I have much to tell you of this thing I humbly call Thee Cubed Abyss and it's darkness...

In thee beginning where was darkness. In thee middle there was darkness... and in the end there was...

As thee veil of darkness descends Thee Agony of Ritual begins, aged flesh is pressed firmly against thee wall of time beyond time...

BERNARD LAMBERT ***It's not rare to find people who feel like it was somebody else's fault that there in jail. What is rare is for someone to have a case as to why they feel that way. And when we say a case, we mean literally. As you'll see in this next writer's letter to us, he feels like he was wrongly convicted of the crime he's been in jail for close to ten years for. And not only does he express this in a letter, but he also goes on to send us the case. Or what he feels like he legally has the right to. It's interesting to see how he's studied on this, and has come up with something that we feel may have a chance. He's writing all the way from Pennsylvania State Prison in Waynesburg, PA, and hopefully he'll have the best of luck with this case because the more out and the less in, the better.***

To Whom It May Concern

Knowing the explicit informality, a letter my reason for writing will be sufficient for gaining your consideration!

I've been incarcerated for approximately 9 1/2 years; for a crime I had nothing at all to do with. Though, I have believed in the Criminal Justice System, I am hopeful that the system can be given some assistance. It is so much harder, proving one's innocence from behind bars. Whatever assistance you can render, will be in the interest of justice best being served to all parties concerned!

My family will give you any assistance you require as well as the people in my home community. They too, are hurt by the fact that I'm in prison for the crime of another; who proved to be a lot lesser a friend, than I had been to him. At your earliest convenience, please assist us in this long quest for the truth! Towards that end, we'll remain ever hopeful!

Sincerely yours,

I've been incarcerated for approximately 9 1/2 years; for a crime I had nothing at all to do with.

Autobiography Of Commonwealth V. Lambert

The Commonwealth's case centered around the fact that two defendants (who ironically were not co-defendants/co-conspirators) planned to commit intentional murder; as well as, murder, the result of attempting/completing some other underlying felony.

On this premise, the commonwealth stated that there's no way possible that two friends cannot know each other's thoughts; that there's no way one can have secrets from the other. If that were the case, the world would be very different. All crimes could either be prevented beforehand; or, two people could equally share the blame for one's demented thoughts.

Can you imagine how different, 'The Garden of Eden' would have been if Adam had foreknowledge about Eve's thoughts; or Abel knowing what, Cain was planning.

Mr. Bernard Lambert's relationship with his friend (Aquil Tillman who has a long history of mental problems and drug use. Mr. Lambert was a friend who frequently drove him various places, including getting medicine for his mental health disorders. Mr. Lambert tried his best to keep him out of trouble) was one of the commonality and convenience. One (Mr. Lambert) provided the transportation; the other (Mr. Tillman) provided the gas money. What they didn't share was female companionship. Mr. Lambert knew Mr. Tillman's girlfriend and family; but only from social outings. Not once has, Mr. Lambert ever stepped inside of Mr. Tillman's girlfriend's house.

Mr. Lambert knew nothing about his friend's losing a skirmish inside his girlfriend's house, nor did Mr. Lambert know his friend got robbed inside the residence, earlier that day. Whether out of pride or otherwise, Mr. Tillman didn't enlighten Mr. Lambert of what went on during his earlier visit to his girlfriend's dwelling.

The commonwealth's position was that the house had been broken into the night before the fatality occurred; and that, Mr. Tillman had supposedly shared his motives with Mr. Lambert. If Mr. Lambert had been present during any break-in the night before the fatality occurred, it would have been a break of custom. Mr. Lambert ritually drops Mr. Tillman off at his girlfriend's residence; tarrying long enough, each time, only to have Mr. Tillman wave to him; which was a signal, indicating that his girlfriend was home, and it was fair for Mr. Lambert to depart.

The so-called break-in wasn't reported to the officials, on the night before the fatality occurred. Probably because of the beating and robbery of Mr. Tillman, that took place simultaneously. The face of the evidence shows Mr. Lambert wasn't present for the break-in or burglary, of the night before the fatality. The day in question convened as usual for Mr. Tillman who sought Mr. Lambert out for a ride. There was no conversation about anything that occurred the night before. There was no conversation from Mr. Tillman about his fisticuffs and robbed. There's no way that Mr. Lambert could've had foreknowledge about what Mr. Tillman was intending to do.

No weapon was ever exposed to Mr. Lambert. Mr. Tillman bore no visible scars from any recent melee. Mr. Lambert dropped his friend off as usual; and waiting for the wave signal from Mr. Tillman; that customarily indicated his departure.

It is regretful that this day was different. While waiting for Mr. Tillman's signal, it never came. After waiting unusual minutes, Mr. Lambert impatiently beeps his horn and yells out his friend's name. Yet, abruptly, without any prior warning, Mr. Tillman appears, clutching his girlfriend beside him. Mr. Lambert didn't think anything was amiss; until Mr. Tillman abruptly lets his girlfriend go, and runs up to my car, looks back, points a gun and fires in the direction of his girlfriend.

Mr. Lambert was now juxtaposed between a rock-and-a-hard-place. Though he wanted nothing to do with what he witnessed, he instinctively obeyed his gun-wielding friend's commands to pull off. He asks Mr. Tillman: "What did you do that for?" and Mr. Tillman responded: "Her other boyfriend and her mom beat me and robbed me earlier."

Even though, Mr. Lambert knew what his friend had done in front of him was totally wrong, Mr. Tillman was still, nevertheless, his friend. Mr. Lambert knew nothing about the homicide that transpired inside the house. To the best of his knowledge, information, and belief – he merely drove his friend away from the scene of a shooting outside the home.

Though, Mr. Lambert learned later, the depth of Mr. Tillman's brutal crimes; because of their friendship, he did not feel compelled to help the officials solve their case.

Mr. Lambert wanted nothing to do with sending someone he grew to love like a little brother to jail, let alone, a possible Death Row. The face of the evidence shows that Mr. Lambert always looked out for his mentally incapacitated friend. Mr. Lambert sympathizes with the grieving family, yet, he knew his friend much longer.

After much soul searching and family support, it was decided by both; Mr. Lambert and his family to surrender to the police, and cooperate to the best of his ability, "after the fact!" Mr. Lambert has never denied being Aquil Tillman's friend. From his ignorance to the law, he wasn't expecting to be included in the crime as an accomplice; merely for fleeing the scene of a crime; obstructing justice; and being and accessory-after-the-fact.

What is congested by Mr. Lambert, is being charged as an accomplice; murder in the second degree; criminal conspiracy; and burglary. Mr. Lambert had no part in any

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of those crimes. Yet, he was punished for not assisting the commonwealth. There was not one scintilla or iota of evidence that even remotely linked Mr. Lambert to the crimes. There was evidence of only one thing; and that was being a friend to his friend; prior to his friend's going off the deep end. The friends had taken a prison photo together; which was evidence only that they knew each other as friends. The painting by Michelangelo, of the participants at the "Last Supper" was also a photo of friends. However, no one accused the other disciples of conspiring with Judas to betray Jesus. Where was the conspiracy with Judas to betray Jesus? Where was the conspiracy there? Was there any evidence of any accomplice? Was it so different from the case at hand? Other than Christ, did anyone else know or speculate about who the betrayer was? When they ran from the scene of the crime where Jesus was taken, were they guilty of anything?

Actus-Reus-A wrongful deed/act which renders the actor criminally liable, if combined with, Mens-Rea. The Actus-Reus is the physical aspect of a crime; whereas the, Mens-Rea (guilty mind) involves the intent factor.

Actus non facit reum, nisi mens sit Rea-An does not make the door of it guilty, unless the mind be guilty; that is, unless the intention be criminal. The intent and the ACT must both concur to constitute the crime!

MENS-REA-AS an element of criminal responsibility: a guilty mind; a guilty or wrongful purpose; a criminal intent.

SECOND-DEGREE-MURDER — this is murder which results from the commission or attempted commission of some other underlying felony. It doesn't matter whether the intent was for death to occur; the malice of the initial offense was established, as to Mr. Lambert. Therefore there is nothing to supply the required element of malice. The distinguishing criterion or hallmark of murder is legal malice, expressed or implied. If Mr. Lambert had killed a person in the perpetration of a felony such as burglary, then the commission of the felony would have imbued the killing - murder. The commission of neither burglary, nor criminal conspiracy was established by evidence. Thus,

BERNARD LAMBERT (CONT.)

neither burglary, nor second-degree murder can stand, as conviction(s).

Criminal Conspiracy, 18 Pa. C.S.903 and possession of an Instrument of Crime, 18 Pa. C.S.907 are both offense defined by chapter nine of the Crimes Code. In, 906-907, Crimes Code18 Pa. C.S. 906 states: "A person may not be convicted of more than one offense defined by this chapter for conduct designed to commit or culminate in the commission of the same crime. What is the single objective in view, according to the commonwealth?

Mr. Lambert committed no burglary;

Mr. Lambert didn't enter into any conspiracy, nor, give tacit consent to the commission of any crime by his silence.

Mr. Lambert was not in possession of any instruments of crime;

Mr. Lambert had no knowledge if the actions that transpired the night before the fatality night;

Mr. Lambert knew nothing about what his friend had intended; on the day of the murder;

Whatever traumatic experience had by Mr. Tillman was personally retained and redressed by him.

It is quite obvious that the only reason, Mr. Lambert was even prosecuted was for the purpose of ensuring that his friend would be convicted. There could be no other objective for the unlawful joiner of both, crimes and defendants. Mr. Lambert conviction was spill over prejudice and the unsavory collateral-damage that resulted from ever having befriended his friend. Mr. Lambert was the pawn in the commonwealth's efforts to insure the "check-mate" of the killer. Whether Mr. Lambert's conviction was unintentional or intentional is irrelevant. The commonwealth accomplished what it purported to do; as to the sole perpetrator of the crime. It's now time to aright an injustice, by reversing the unlawful conviction of a totally innocent man. For this end, Mr. Lambert ever prays for justice!

J. LOPEZ

Writing from Santa Rita (Alameda County Jail) we bring to you a self-deemed, first time participant, long time reader. And man, does he drop a bomb on us. He talks about what he does to stay sane while locked up. And how there are instances when he thinks he's going crazy. He even throws a couple metaphors in there about dogs and sharks. It's hella tight. We hope to hear more from J. Lopez in the near future. So here it goes...

First Time Participant, Long Time Reader

It's day four that I've been stuck in my cell. Birdbaths are a struggle. I've come to think I'm mentally disturbed by now. I believe I have many things to complain about how the correctional system is ran. Yet I've managed to keep comments and complaints to myself. I feel like a good dog chained to a pole watching life go by, which only makes the dog go mad. I've heard the anticipation of waiting drives one crazy.

I've been down two weeks for not reporting to my P.O. How much time will I actually serve from my understanding I have yet another full week of anticipation. Will I have gone mad by then not quite so. Last night I was awakened by the sound of a man gone mad. He was yelling and banging on his toilet. It was all bad because this fellow inmate was in a different unit from where I reside now.

He kept his tantrum going for at least an hour. Would I make it to that point to where I would disturb my fellow neighbors during their sleep, I hope not. Although I do find myself talking to myself for no reason at all. Would this be my first step to going mad or have I skipped the first step. I believe now that the first step was to continue entering the revolving door that only ends up in jails but I just don't know. I do know that I've pulled knots of hair from my head and had the balls to tear that nail off of my big toe, ouch indeed. It still hurts and I have not attempted to seek medical attention. Now I ask myself again have I gone mad yet? Hmmm.

I believe I have reached the point of becoming a caveman of some sort. I'm stuck in a cell with a walking distance of five steps and then turn around. Yeah I believe I'm that chained up dog. Oh how I'm loved by my owners, the state of California. Ha! What a joke it wouldn't be so bad if I had a cell mate. Oh wait, did you hear about the captured great white shark at the Monterrey Bay Aquarium? After the shark realized that his space had been confined to a tank with other sharks. The great white shark went mad and began to attack its tank mates. What did the authorities do about it? They released the shark back into the ocean to let it be the shark it's meant to be.

In my case no I will not turn into a rabid dog that will attack its owners nor will I become the blood hungry shark. I can only express myself through this letter, with the hopes of keeping my sanity. I know I'm a good person because I'm not committing crimes in my daily life on the outside nor will I be a burden to my community. Now understanding that every inmate and person is different from one another yet our addictions are the same, whether it be drugs, money, or just attention. Once we become a part of the correctional system it's hard to get out.

I believe the system has made it easy for us to forget about responsibility. To give us three meals a day and a place to rest our head at night. To give us such a place to forget about reality of life. To work, pay bills, and function as a positive role model in our own community. I have no idea if anything I have written makes any sense. But one thing I do know is that I want to be that positive role model out on the streets struggling to be free! Keep ya' head up and don't let no one get you down. Even yourself.

SMILEY ***Writing from N.A. Chaderjian, a Youth Authority (CYA) institution in Stockton, CA, we bring to you a young man with a very big heart. Compassionately expressing himself through poetry, he releases some of the tension incarceration brings with every stroke of his pencil. Mostly writing love poems to his girl, but also some deep stuff about being 'back stabbed', he takes us on a ride through his life that keeps us wide eyed after we're done. We hope Chad is, at the very least, giving him time to work out all these thoughts because we see a whole lot of potential when we read his poetry. He could do Hallmark cards or even publish his own book of poetry. Only time will tell, what's in store for this budding poet, but hopefully it's something great because that's what we envision for him.***

Girl you said you only 16 with
No more fear or tears
Just wait you'll have them occur to
You within these oncoming years

Little Kid

You just a little kid
But I'll be there to listen
You just a little kid
Eyes like diamonds when they glisten
You just a little kid
Feeling sorry for what you did
You still just a little kid

Girl you said you only 16 with
No more fear or tears
Just wait you'll have them occur to
You within these oncoming years
You said your caring, needy, and
Faithful but to who
You don't know what love is
It ain't even found you
If you looking for someone to help
You out... girl yeah that's me
But I don't think your ready to
Step up to my level you see
I have so much knowledge I'll
Make your little head spin
I have so much you want
Me to spit at you again
You said you young, sexy and
Is it mentally or physically free
Is that why you are sitting
Behind a metal door similar to me
I ain't trying to hate on you
I'm just bringing you back to earth
So you can see a different side
Of life and what its worth
And the way you spit to The Beat
You mentally sound like a little kid
This is probably your first offense
Maybe some petty shhh you did
You know being 16 I have a
Little bit of respect for you
To me you yearn for knowledge so I'll
Be waiting when you want me to spit at you
You know a mind is a dangerous thing
It likes to steal and kill other human beings
But if educated it can become a powerful weapon
Some use knowledge while others keep it kept in
Don't get caught messing with gangs
'Cause they all the same
If you do keep your eyes peeled and
Watch out for them boys
You can shake them but don't get
Caught slipping knocking with your toys
Remember you have to be mentally,
Physically, and verbally smart
Or you can be like The Beat Within
And have a pure heart.

Revived

When I was out still playing the game
I used to treat her like she was nothing to me
I was so caught up I forgot to love her
And cherish her with my love and
Spoiled her with money and jewelry to me
I thought that all meant something
She must have told me a thousand times
She wanted more than I could offer
Thought that meant something else so
My gift to her was our daughter
I told her I'm going out to make some cash
While I was out chasing after some ass
I didn't know what I was doing I was
Young and still playing childish games
My infatuation for other women was crazy though
It wasn't love to me it was all the same
The other women I would take out sometimes
Even bring them home were driving me wild
Was too deep got lost in the game I
Even forgot about my beautiful baby child
By then I was blinded and got caught slippin',
I got arrested off of some crazy bull-shhh...
By the time I was able to see the judge
Sentenced me to do some time away
Finally I had time to clear my mind see my
Mistakes and this is what I have to say
I can be like Ruben and say that:
Smiley's sorry for 2004
But what about them other years
That I walked out of that door
Now that I am able to see
I see I put you through a lot of misery
Now that I'm able to comprehend
I'm sorry for what I done back then
I'm willing to take responsibility
For my corrupted actions
I'll stop playing them kiddy games
And even stop mackin'
I'm ready to be the man
That I used to be
Be the man you met before
I got caught up in the streets
Will you forgive me and take me back
I promise I'll never treat you like that
It's up to you about what you want
To do and I'll agree to that
I'll do anything change all my ways if
That what it take to get you back
If you don't forgive me and take me
Back I don't know what I'd do
I'd probably cry myself to sleep mad at
Myself for that day I should've married you.

Back Stabber

Girl I thought that you was my
True homie why did you do me like that
We were so close found out my deepest
Secrets then stabbed me in the back
I knew it would happen with my other
Homies but I never suspected it'd be you
'Till my big homie started to lace me up
But I refused to believe that was true
You know I had mad respect for you and
Your family cause of what ya'll did for me
They still do remain faithful but you were
The only messed up one, the corrupted seed
I always thought that the only ones
That was corrupted were the dudes
But if you look back in the past Eve
Had deceived Adam, women are corrupted too
So now my eyes are truly open I do
See the true secrets of the game
I know now that everything is different but
If you don't know it, it looks the same
You messed up now I'm not only verbally
And physically but now I'm mentally strong
What you decline to do or come up short
Basically I succeed whatever you do wrong
So when you thought you can just push me down
You can but I refused to be kept down

You're Angel

God has already sent your angel cause
Right here is where I've always been
You've always been looking else where for
Love but what about your best friend
Who was the one that was always there?
To wipe them tears from your eyes
Hold you close to comfort you and
Whispered I'm here no need to cry
See I love you so much I am willing to
Take a bullet just so you don't die
And I'm willing to drop almost anything
To help you through them hard times.
Girl haven't you noticed that every time
You're with me we both shine
Though when the day ends I pray to God to open
Up your eyes and see that you're meant to be mine
Haven't you seen I get jealous when?
You go out with them other dudes
Cause he can't make you feel how I can
Basically can't do what Smiley do
It's funny everybody thinks that we
Are more than best friends?
When you're here this don't be confused I'll still
Keep on loving you like I do 'till the end
So when you pray, pray for a lifetime with me
Cause I'm the one and only, your Smiley.

Deep in the back of your head you always

SMILEY (CONT.)

Knew about the feelings that I have for you
My thoughts and feelings for you is not
Infatuation the way I feel is true
I guess you somehow, someway you
Failed to recognize and comprehend
That my feelings for you is deep but
You kept me as a best friend
See me I never physically, mentally,
Or verbally abused you
If you look at your situation you
Mainly leave it up to the other dudes
I'm there to comfort you and if I
Can protect you before it's too late
Cause punks like them make it harder
On us to get you on a date
You know that I'm different from other vatos
I'll never hurt you or put you in harms way
You also know if there is any type of
Emergency small or big call me night or day
Basically what I'm trying to do right now is
Bring this to your attention
On showing you how much I love you
And to show my affection
Between me and you I keep everything real
Are you down with me or not
What's the deal?

BEEZY BOY

A regular that we miss in our SF/YGC workshops, and haven't heard from in a while, this next young writer hits us with some sad stuff this week. Writing from Glen Mills School, all the way in Concordville, Pennsylvania, he writes first about a conversation he had with someone who wanted to stop banging. Beezy Boy's take on it is that if you're going to want to get out, you shouldn't start in the first place, which is a respectable opinion. However, most of us feel like there is always room for chances. We don't know a time when someone got jumped in thinking they were going to want to get out eventually. Life has too many twists and turns to plan everything, so why not let someone stop when he wants to, when he feels like he's done. That's true change that most of us are scared of because we've grown too attached to our own comfort zones — even if they're comfort zones that put us in situations that are uncomfortable. But to each its own. We respect this young man and his opinion, however we're also entitled to our own. It doesn't take away from the fact that we miss his words at all. Keep us in the loop and next time please don't take so long to write.

Trapped

Yea what it do Beat? Well this yo' boy Beezy Boy also known as Cudabeez best known as Mel Da Star. Well Beat, so me is kinda cool, ya' dig. I have been so busy that I haven't had tha chance to pick up a pen and write a letter but now I'm back at it. Well aye, I was just sittin' in my room and thinking 'bout my life and all the shhh that has been done on my part (gotten my hands dirty). But another man come into my room the other day and started to just preach about nothing but basically what the topic is 'bout is he stated he a "blood' and that he don't' want to gang-bang anymore (he didn't want to be in it).

My question to him was "Why get into the game and after awhile want to get out?" No b-s it's trap or die (rep yo' block/hood or even barrio) until yo' death date, I mean at the same time I also understand that it could get you in a lot of trouble but don't choose to get in the game if you are gonna feel trapped, ya' heard me?

I didn't choose to be what I am. I was born a star (don't trip Beat I am not braggin on where I'm from), I do what I do, just like the next man do what he does because it's life the only life that we know, so when you guys ask the question why do we feel trapped? I am pretty sure somebody will tell you somethin' similar as I just did, well hey Beat I am just dropping a straight bomb on y'all as you guys know I keeps it lit!!

The Fallen Stars

Hit Man - my big brother yo' will power to do things will forever be missed by me.
Money B - stayed getting that dip-set, I know you rich in heaven (ha, ha) stay watchin' over everybody.
JFK aka Lil' Jon - can't believe you're gone and it's been awhile it's killin' me inside
Frank Nitty - get that money always, rest in paradise.
Lil' Bra aka Black Pat - you know how we livin' life fast in the fast lane hold us down.
Waga – lil' bra all I can say is I really wish I was there to spend those last hours wit' you. See you when I get to the crossroad.
Lil' Rell - damn lil' daddy if only you knew how much it hurt me.
Bump - I remembered how you stayed hopin' on the D-bikes you will be forever loved and missed.
Cheap Charley - I was really a baby still, but I seen those home made tapes of block parties it's all the love dawg!
Its so many more that I can name. But the ones that I named so far it's just hard to keep goin' on. You will forever remain in my memory and I will live my life through that!!

So when you pray, pray for a lifetime with me
Cause I'm the one and only,
your Smiley.

WILLIAM GRAJEDA ***Our second place winner in the 15th Editorial Note Writing Contest and sort of a household name around our office, this next great thinker/writer is one we anticipate hearing from every week because we know he'll be dropping heat regardless of what he chooses to write about. This week it's 'Time In The County Zoo' where he takes us on a journey through his current environment as he writes from Santa Rita (Alameda County Jail). And true to Grajeda form (his young brother is just as good a writer and is featured in this issue also) he blows our minds. Between the way he depicts how guards give orders to the thoughts that flow through his mind when they do give orders, you can tell that this author has been doing this for a while and maybe should pursue a career as a writer. Who knows? But anyhow, he closes with a story about someone getting shot in a particular neighborhood and what goes on in the community when something of that magnitude happens. Our kind of story teller and we appreciate all he's done for us thus far. We have a feeling we'll be hearing from him very soon and we'll be waiting.***

Everybody Stop For One Moment Please

Homeboy is on his back laid out on the side of the street bleeding from two bullet holes in the chest. There is a puddle of blood trickling towards the gutter and everyone on the block that knows him, stands at a close distance as a semi-circle of young aged faces forms around the body, gathering together to have a last look at their loved one. Tears stream down a young woman's face or two while the rest seem too passive or uncertain as to why another life had to die on their block.

There was a rumor he had some funk, there was a rumor this spot is hot, there was a rumor he forgot to pay a street tax, there was a rumor that he was on barrowed time anyway, there was a rumor that he was going back to school, working part-time so he could raise-up out the ghetto, there was a rumor he got into it with some cats down at the liquor store a few nights back, there was a rumor there was a rumor...

His pops rest in peace ten years ago, got shot just on the next block over... his mama is in a drug program, someone gots to call her up... his big brother in prison doing 15 years someone send him a letter... his cousin in the county jail fighting three strikes he's gonna be mad...

The rest of the scattered ghetto family and the block mourn with a fifth of Remy Martin and a blunt, then pass the word around about what rumor got him sent to the graveyards... There's no talk about heaven or hell perhaps they're uncertain or scared? Perhaps it's a taboo thing...

Retribution, redemption, vengeance, sorrow, justice...

Anger, pain, loss, revenge, more loss — another day in the ghetto life...

Something tells me this ain't over yet something tells me that we are way past the beginning and nowhere near close to the end...

Time In The County Zoo

Time lost inside the sands of a broken hourglass, scattered memories forsaken on solid stained streets, desperate pieces of life never meant to fit — jagged misshappen' glimpse of caged forms; reds, yellows, blues, gray reflections that mirror hidden prisons within...

What's going on? Why is this happening? I read in the newspaper today, yesterday, tomorrow; there was another death in the street, nobody I knew, but they did all look familiar. Perhaps I passed them by the liquor store, or we've seen each other in some sort of passing? The only strange thing about it is that I have never been in that part of town. But I am sure that I know them all, or at least one or two? Perhaps...

At 4:30 every morning the sounds of breakfast wakes me up, I am tired of being disturbed! Leave me alone! What is this? Go away! Why do I hear people screaming "Doors are banging; chains are clinking, keys are turning, twisting: it's breakfast time" "it's breakfast time" do you wanna eat? A cup of mushy glob, a stale biscuit, a half pint of low fat going bad any day... This ain't no third world country, this is just a golden corner piece of the good U.S of A

A average of a thousand a week for every week last year they filled a cage, 2.2 million colors of blue, yellow, red and gray reflections have been captured by that glimpse into a prison mirror as of today! What's going on? Why is this happening? – I am not asking these questions! I'm just hearing voices trapped inside a cage.

"Hands In the air" "Hands behind your back" "Hands in front of you, where I can see them" – "Don't move a muscle or your dead" "Strip down naked, now bend over, squat, and cough" "Didn't you hear what I said? Bend over, now squat, and cough?" – "What is this?" "Why is this happening to me?" I don't know want to strip naked? We aren't animals "shut up" "What is your county zoo tag number? Be quiet! Stop talking" Now get dressed! Hurry up, time to take you to your cage! ... I'm not complaining. I'm not crying. I'm just hearing the last and bewildered in my silence.

A pair of eyes staring out from a window in the corner of a cage and sees many possible dreams and new destinies, another pair of eyes staring out the same caged window sees nothing but grave yards and cemeteries, another sees the eternal bottoms of hell, another sees the endless heights hope... one looks yellow, one looks red, one looks gray, one looks blue; all are staring together simultaneously from a cruel darkness that lies from within, all feeling a different shade of a caged deception. I have become weary with time or perhaps time has become weary with me...

The beast growls, the dragon sneers. The baboon grins. The snakes coil silently and the sharks circle patiently in wait for their share off carcass.

Yet time is the laughing mockery that becomes us all; time being captured by a broken hourglass and a handful of sand that slips away onto the shores of some distant eternity.

KEITH SMITH ***Writing from CDC (California Department of Corrections) in San Diego, CA, we bring to you a man who's eager to teach. And you know we always enjoy that at The Beat. He's from East Palo Alto and since we do workshops down there now, it's the perfect opportunity for him to reach out to young people in his own community. He has really good things to say in this next piece, 'Cares And Concerns To The Bay Area Teenagers', so we were a little disappointed when we saw how short it was. Not criticism, but a compliment. We feel like he has much more to say and we're ready to hear it. Are you?***

Cares And Concerns To The Bay Area Teenagers . . .

We need the help from young men in the community to be role models for our younger youth because there are too many youth locked up today because of peer pressure in the community. Peer pressure is getting worse every day. We need some of our young, positive youth to help put back our communities on the right path. Only we can change the things that go on in our communities — like 'ex,' weed, and crack. Start warning your friends and if they need help, find them help, because that's what friends do for friends.

Take a look where you are today, in a cell or on the streets, always tell yourself, "My past doesn't have to be my future." Beat Within readers, anything the mind can believe, the mind can achieve!

We need some of our young, positive youth to help put back our communities on the right path.

A comforting thought
That no matter where we are
We're never alone

CONCRETE THOUGHTS

If you like poetry that makes you think, with words that keep a dictionary on your lap as you read them, then we have more than just a treat for you this week. Going by the name, 'Concrete Thoughts,' we bring you a poet on a mission full of metaphors, haikus, symbolism, and everything else a great poem gives you. Sometimes it was hard for us to understand him, but that's what expression is about. As long as he's expressing himself, who cares if we can make certain parts out or not. It's his stuff, his thoughts, his creation, we're merely just an audience. Hopefully you readers will enjoy the writings of Concrete Thoughts. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

An Inner Steculumism

I'm just a uncomplicated renegade prisoners
Seeking the recondite ness of a rose
Just because I heard that the essence
Of a rose is in the scent
Being the simple man that I am I just
Had to inhale the profundity of this logic

The discovery was astounding and the perception left
A profound impact that will destroy my simplicity
Who would of known that this awareness
Would guide me to a deeper conscious
The aroma was thriving with intimacy
Capturing one's deepest nature with inquisitiveness

This freefall of a deeper conscious
Revealed the different configuration of fragrance
You can take two roses from the
Same rose bush at the same instance
Then identify two separate temperaments of each rose
Each revealing it's rich blend of invigorating scent

Each as enthralling as the one before it
But a true renegade can only capitulate once
Therefore he must be very restrictive in
His recently founded scented realm of intelligibility
Anyone can inhale its enrich scent
But a cultivated mind will prevail

An Inner Thought

I am not into rhyme
Neither shall I hold
It as if it was a crime
For a person to be so bold

I simply have no chime
In a musical mold
Where the rhythm of time
Would please anyone I told

A Haiku Poem
We are connected
With the sweet scent of your thoughts
Emotional stamp

Holding onto hope
With watery mouth and a
Deep pain of pleasure

A comforting thought
That no matter where we are
We're never alone

Reverberating
A heated moment in time
Accumulating

Mental faculty
To cherish in the future
Just thinking ahead

This is a Villanelle Poem

My mind sees allusive dimension
I have to learn to express the profundity
By using correct grammar with equal compulsion

Being that I'm bankrupt in education
Yet having control over my sanity
My mind sees allusive dimension

I shall study words as in language structuralization
Systematically composed body of words that exhibit discernible regularity
By using correct grammar with equal compulsion

Like the technical nature of apostrophes and contraction
Without proper structure, the results will end in word deformity
My mind sees allusive dimension

Yet I have profound contempt in apostrophes and contraction
And now it's time to correct this propensity
By using correct grammar with equal compulsion

By combining my contempt with my suggestive reflection
By doing so, I would be rectifying my proclivity
My mind sees allusive dimension
By using correct grammar with equal compulsion

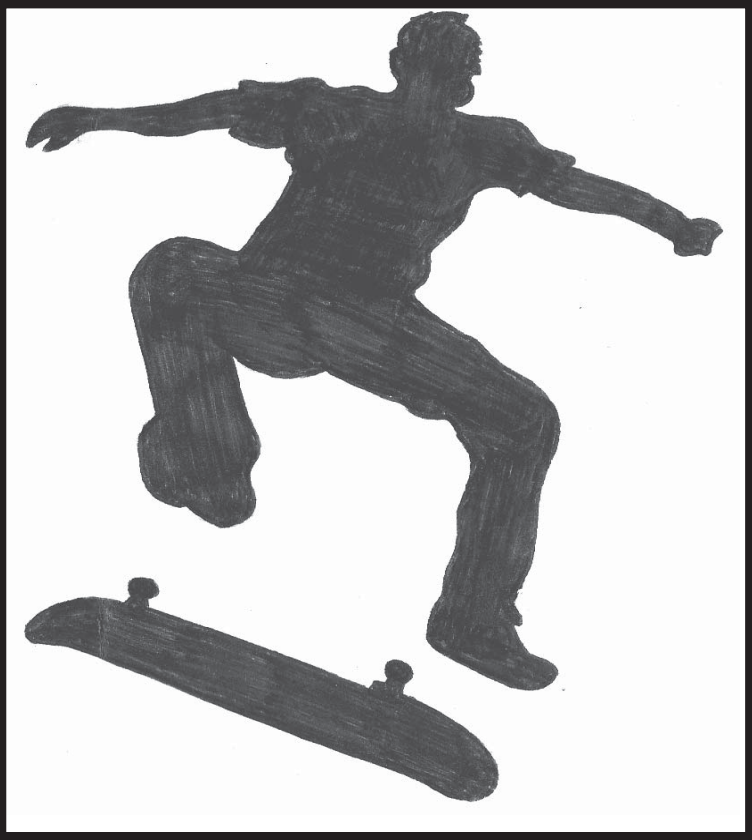
An Unleashed Passage

Riding the winds of fire
Traveling a razor wire of time
Staying two arms length away
From a shooting star and caressing
The surface of her smile
Until the tears of pleasure
Quench her soul's thirst and
Collect each moment in a
Treasure box of hope
Because it's the only thing
We have to share
Written words of a man and woman
Holding hands in their mind
Holding each dream they share
While the people around them are
Fading in the mist of lost hope

A Haiku Poem

Similarity
In a form of creative
Ideology

FRISKIE ***From incarceration, to drug addiction, to being raped, to missing the love of her life — this young woman, who we're sure most of you readers know, is her own feature film. She's been through more than most people we know and is still struggling as we speak. We want so bad to reach out to her and let her know that this can all stop if she really wants it to. Sometimes the holes we dig seem too deep for us to dig out of, but there's always a chance. We hope she takes that chance because as you'll read in her heartfelt poetry, she really has some hurdles to get over. Like in her first poem, 'The Dangers Of Drugs,' she sort of longing for that feeling again and it's evident in her glorification of how it effected her, but then she closes with a more thoughtful poem about her addiction and how she needs to stay away from her drug of choice. But in between there are poems that suggest why she's doing drugs in the first place. Drugs numb us from our feelings. They stunt our emotional growth. So, with the pain of such things as being raped by a boyfriend's father, and missing a loved one when both are in and out of jail, there's no wonder why a young woman would want to numb herself from pain like that. Friskie writes us from the CYA in Ventura, Ca. Once upon a time she was a consistent writer out of our weekly workshops in San Mateo County aka Hillcrest.***



The Dangers Of Drugs

In the night, I be creepin' on the block
Not givin' a damn stay wit' a glock,
Hittin' bars, jackin' cars, living life do or die,
No matter what I'm down to ride.
Copin' sacks, pulling all-nighters,
Keep the cri-cri burnin', no use for fire fighters
I'm like ghost writer stay with a pizo and lighter,
Seen but never heard, free as a bird when I'm off that shhh,
Did anything and everything I could to get lit
Taking lines up the nose 'till I could feel it drip.
Hallucination's no problem as long as it's a good trip.
Usher said let it burn, so let me pull out my pipe pack it,
Melt it down, do the shhh right.
Up for weeks, never sleep day or night.
I be in the darkness, so I stay out of sight
I like shhh to be dark, never under the spotlight.
So I'm getting out soon, forget parole
I don't care anymore, I've already sold my soul.
Maybe it's because my family never gave me kisses and hugs,
I don't ride with squares. I creep wit' thugs
Now I'm in the 'Y' prayin' on Muslim rugs.
I just no longer give a, uh...
You outta luck.
And that is the danger of drugs.

Rape

You touched me and I'd cry
The thought of you on top of me makes me wanna die
I couldn't get you off of me no matter how hard I tried
You didn't budge and you wouldn't subside
You kissed my body and I felt dirtier than shhh
You bought your drugs, you got me lit
After what you got what you wanted, my wrists I slit
You made me wanna die
You sick ass bastard, you got off on making me cry
You were erected as I struggled to breathe
You were happy to force open my knees
The pain you caused is just too much
I hear your name it's like a punch in the gut
Because to you I wasn't your son's lady, to you I was just another slut
Now small hallways make me twitch
As you forced your way inside me you called me a worthless witch
For you I have no words only this
I pray that you die soon, and may you rest in piss.

Stressin' Out

I'm stressin' out, I can't be with my baby
I love him so much, I'm going crazy
He ain't wrote me in a minute, but I understand
I miss you so much, now I'm sittin' in a stranger's land
I feel like I lost him
I even wrote a piece askin' for forgiveness
'Cause I know together we can achieve greatness
I'd die if he leaves me while I'm sitting here in prison
I could be out there with him, but I'm here because of a bad decision
I'm stressing out, baby I'm trippin'
I'm lost and I think I might be something you forgettin'
I'm in love with you so bad, you're all I've ever had
I got your picture here, the one I took of you back in 6th grade
Baby just know my feelings for you will never fade
I'm stressin' out because I ain't got you here
You don't know how bad I want you near
You are out, and I am here
Trying to fight the coming tears
I don't know what to do, I'm stressin' baby
I love you

My Angel Baby

Writing-our only communication
To your heart is my destination
Unsure of how to tell you how much I care
And baby I wish that I could be there.
I want you to know I love you everyday.
I was lost; you helped me find my way
When there was no one else, you were there for me
When I was alone you came and set me free
Without you near me I'm going crazy
I love you so much my angel baby
You helped point me in the right direction
And only for you will I give my love and affection
I'm your locked up angel baby, and you should let me love you
I'll do anything you want me to do.

Your Spell (Dedicated To My Addiction)

Your spell got me enchanted
I can't feel without your magic
I need you so I don't have to face a life that's tragic
You casted your spell, now I'm going to hell
I can't help myself, I need you
I need you in my lungs, body, and brain
Only when you, my glass pipe, is at my lips do I feel sane
I got stuck on your spell, now my life has changed
I'm not the same little girl, I once was
Now for some reason I need you
Near me just because I need the drugs
You cast your spell on me, and it won't go away
Now, I'm under your spell of addiction everyday
I just can't escape your spell
So now everyday I feel like hell
Everyday your spell, people sell
To make some bread
But they don't know how you always in my head
I need the pills, I need them trees, I need
More than anything those amphetamines,
I need you, or at least I thought I did
But you took my life I'm only a kid
So of your spell, I want to be rid
I'm done, I'm cool, I can't play with you
Cause one hit's too many and a thousands never enough
So, addiction, to get over you I have to be tough
Your spell had touched me, but the attraction's no longer there
But for your spell's effects I still care
All I wanted was your love
But now I got that from my man
And Grumpy gives me a high that
Your drugs never can
You sent me to hell
So now I wish to say goodbye to your spell.

FRISKIE (CONT.)

You are the flames bring each limb
You crush my bones while wearing a grin
Oh, how I long to leave this world of sin

Game Over

You can't hurt me because you're no longer here
Because of you I've shed too many tears
You're not worth it, you're hell on earth
You fucking bastard, you should have died at birth
I'm going crazy, I can't take it anymore
I only feel safe when balled up in a corner on the floor
I trusted you, and you torment my soul
I feel like I'm on fire, but can't drop and roll
You are the flames bring each limb
You crush my bones while wearing a grin
Oh, how I long to leave this world of sin
I hate you, you sick bastard, why didn't you just let me go
Why did you choose me, why can't I know
You raped me, hated me, and didn't know me at all
You knew I was young, so you wanted to see me fall
I hope you burn in hell for forever and seven days
Because I'm free from you because of Jesus' ways.
Game Over

Everyone seemed excited to show their strength by placing sharpened steel into another man. I refuse! I have learned how precious life is and I miss life with my family.

ADAM AZEVEDO

Often we have our deepest and most profound thoughts when we're isolated from the rest of the world. This next writer wrote his own introduction to a poem he wrote while on lockdown at San Quentin State Prison after a stabbing. He's currently in Sonoma County Jail in Santa Rosa, CA, and from the sound of his poem, he's focused and ready to do what he needs to in order to once again be free. These are the people we need to hear from. The ones who are actually thinking and leading their own lives. We respect your courage and can't wait for you to drop some more heavy hitting lines on us.

Dear Beat Readers

I wrote this during a recent lockdown because of a stabbing. People were ready for war. Everyone seemed excited to show their strength by placing sharpened steel into another man.

I refuse! I have learned how precious life is and I miss life with my family. I will not bring pain to another man, nor will I compromise what I know is right. May God have mercy on me for my decision.

Walk Alone!

It's not easy
Being the only light in the dark
How am I supposed to act
When you get stuck
For not being hard
Try to be different
It's dangerous to stand-alone
My main focus is supposed to be
Me getting safely home
People hate what they don't understand
Behind these walls
It can be suicidal
Being your own man
I walk the line
But only one shadow follows me
They hear me talk the talk
But violence is the only test they see
I don't raise my hand
I refuse to put in work
It's not because I'm scared
Or afraid of being hurt
I've seen a better life
There is a light that shines in me
All because not even these walls
Can stop me from being free

Most people look at life through sugar-coated lenses
Wake the hell up,
life ain't about mansions, casinos, BMW's, and Benzes

check out the rest of Chris Grajeda's BWO piece on page 57